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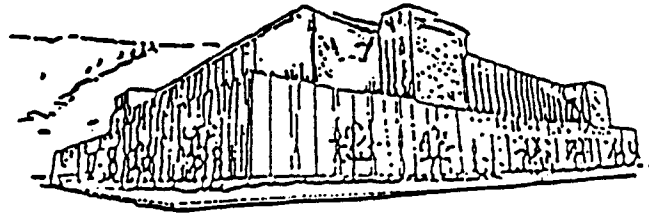
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ALBERT CAMUS, FRANTZ FANON, AND FRENCH ALGERIA:  
THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLT

by

Alexander C. Karklins

B.A. The University of Montana, 1996

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

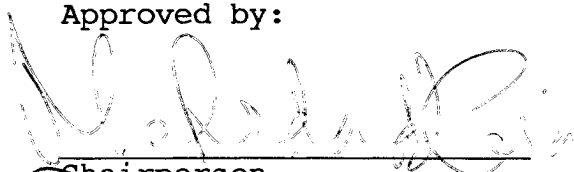
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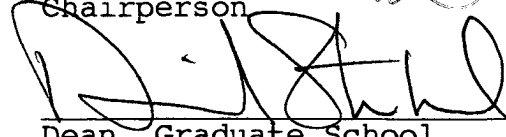
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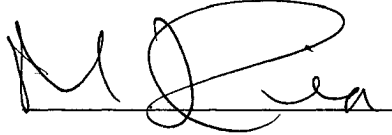
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Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, and French Algeria: The Colonial Experience and the Philosophy of Revolt

Director: Mehrdad Kia



The Algerian Revolution of 1954-1962, which severed the colonial bond between France and Algeria, produced a severe crisis in French politics by bringing down the Fourth Republic and ending the era of French colonialism.

Two of the major intellectual figures of the Algerian war for independence, Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon, provide an invaluable insight into the ambiguities and conflicted nature of French colonialism. The development of each man's philosophy of revolt during times of crisis reveals an evolution of thought which lay outside of the European norms of the time.

Camus and Fanon followed similar paths in their intellectual careers. Raised in French colonies, they were educated in the manner of the mother country and defended France's interests during World War II. Disillusioned by European culture in the post-war period Camus and Fanon set out on different paths of revolt, forming ideological positions outside of, yet closely tied to the lessons of European thought.

By tracing the careers and intellectual development of Camus and Fanon, this study will highlight the convergences and ultimate differences in how both writers approached the Algerian conflict. By placing their literary and political works in the proper historical context, this study will assert that the works of Camus and Fanon must be read together in order to properly understand the phenomenon of colonialism and decolonization.

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### Introduction

*Prospero:*

Abhorred slave,  
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,  
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or other . . .

*Caliban:*

You taught me language; and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

For centuries, Europe exercised its will on its overseas colonies, driven in part by sheer force and economic motivations. A product of this expansive enterprise has been the widespread phenomenon of colonial culture, most prevalent in those colonies which had maintained close ties to the mother country as well as a significant number of Europeans living within their borders. Much recent scholarship has explored the nature of this relationship, but more from the perspective of how natives were acted upon by the European metropole, while treating the minority of European colonists as a collusive or even synonymous entity. This assertion is far from accurate, for in the case of colonialism, its transformative effect was not limited to the native population. Colonial<sup>1</sup> culture, by its very nature, is ambiguous, occupying

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<sup>1</sup>The term "colonial" will be used exclusively for a relationship between Europe and its imperial holdings in which a significant number of Europeans has migrated to a colony on a permanent basis, spawning a multi-generational culture. This is quite different from most imperial territories which involve a largely administrative or purely extractive



the no-man's land between Europe and the colony. This relationship has become most evident during the period of decolonization and most acutely in the years following the Second World War.

The case of French Algeria illustrates this complex phenomenon dramatically. Originally taken by the French in 1830 as a measure against the Barbary Coast pirates and retribution over grain payments, Algeria became France's largest and most culturally significant colony. Due to its large European population, including large proportions of Spaniards, Maltese, Italians, Germans and Swiss; along with its majority Arab and Berber natives, Algerian colonial society was decidedly mixed. Together with Algeria's long standing relationship with France, this mixture of cultures was torn apart by the Algerian Revolution. The events of 1954-1962 exercised a significant trauma over not only Algerians, but over the political and cultural fabric of France itself.

The words and actions of Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon during the Algerian revolution contribute deep insight into the nature of colonial culture and the trauma of decolonization. While on the surface these two intellectuals inhabit opposing sides of the debate over French imperialism, their lives and intellectual development are

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relationship. In the case of Algeria, the term *colon* will refer to the wealthy land-owning class, while *pied noir* refers to working class Algerians of European origin.

closely intertwined with the complexities of colonial culture. When read together, Fanon and Camus offer a wealth of information into the process of colonial self-fashioning during times of crisis, a search for identity in the conflicted and ambivalent era of colonization. These two sons of the French empire extended their influence to Europe and eventually the whole world through prescient and insightful observations on the changing nature of colonialism. That their ultimate views on the Algerian conflict should differ sharply is not a surprise. Camus, the sentimental *pied noir*, and Fanon the radical revolutionary sought strikingly different resolutions to the same problems. The parallel nature of their intellectual development is, however, a worthy course of study into the ways in which colonialism breeds conflicted identities and existential crises unique from the metropole.

This case study will explore the way in which Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon came to adopt their respective positions on the Algerian conflict. Beginning with their childhoods under French colonial rule, and ending with their untimely deaths before the conclusion of the Algerian revolution, the words and deeds of Camus and Fanon will be analyzed as products of the same colonial enterprise. By fleshing out the details of their intellectual journey, we will better understand the political positions taken by each man.

Structured as a dual biography as well as an intellectual history, this study will demonstrate the ways in which the French colonial system challenged the convictions of both Camus and Fanon. As both men were brought up to view French culture with an air of reverence, their colonial identities and lived experience proved alienating to this spirit. Despite their attempts to join French society on equal footing, each man developed an intellectual stance of revolt, albeit in different ways and with drastically different consequences.

The fairly recent phenomenon of post-colonial literary theory will also be explored and criticized in relation to the lives and writings of Camus and Fanon. Now a burgeoning academic field, post-colonial studies have shed new light on the concept of colonial identity through an alternative reading of the literature and philosophy of the time. At the same time, many of the scholars in this field de-emphasize the importance of historical context, often choosing texts by Fanon or Camus that ignore the influential role that lived experience and world-shaping events played in what Camus and Fanon wrote. To confine these thinkers to theory is to do them a disservice. Another goal of this study will be to find the middle ground of analysis, providing as close an approximation to the intellectual development of Camus and Fanon as possible, without relying too heavily on abstract theories.

Perhaps at this point a note on methodology is in order. While researching the lives and writings of Camus and Fanon one encounters a difficulty in placing them within a fixed ideology. Throughout their careers, both men rejected what they saw as the dominant or hegemonic<sup>2</sup> discourses of the day and unmasking them in turn. Their status as colonial subjects placed them in between the colony and the metropole, adopting the intellectual tradition of Europe while clinging to their heritage, be it Martinican or Algerian. Their refusal to conform to the ideal of the "European man" put them at odds with their contemporaries. In turn, their embrace of the intellectual heritage of the metropole distanced them from the majority of their countrymen. It is thus nearly impossible to place them in a historical category except for the ones they ultimately created for themselves. Camus, with *L'Homme Révolté* and Fanon with *Les Damnés de la terre* went beyond the dominant systems of thought of their time, a phenomenon which evokes Karl Mannheim's "free-floating intellectual," a thinker who breaks free from the dominant ideologies and utopian thought of his era.<sup>3</sup>

For the intellectual historian to seriously approach these counter-hegemonic figures necessitates an investigation

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<sup>2</sup>Antonio Gramsci articulates the idea of "hegemony" in his "Prison Notebooks," collected in *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From Cultural Writings*, David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1936).

of what, specifically, they were rebelling against. For Camus, it was the influx of violence and totalitarian thought into Europe first by Nazism, then Communism. For Fanon, it was the Manichean discourse of colonialism which enslaved the Third World. The intellectual paths taken by each of this study's subjects will demonstrate, in the pages that follow, how Camus and Fanon anticipated and confronted the problems between Europe and her colonies; and how much their stances of revolt complement one another in the current academic debate over colonialism.

### Chapter 1: The Colonial Identities of Camus and Fanon

Albert Camus was born on November 1, 1913 at Mondovi in the Algerian interior.<sup>4</sup> The son of a wine maker, whose family had emigrated from France in the 1830s, and a Spanish mother, Camus was born into a lower-middle class family, the youngest of two boys. Young Albert was proud of his mixed background, viewing his ancestors as bold pioneers in Algeria, who had chosen to pursue a better life across the Mediterranean. When he was less than a year old, his father was sent to war in Europe, where he was badly wounded at the Marne, dying shortly thereafter. Despite never knowing him, the impression Lucien Camus exercised on Albert was profound. One detail in particular, related by his mother, was Lucien's witnessing of an execution, which sent him home dazed and physically ill, despite his conviction that the executed criminal was deserving of this fate. The loss of his father, coupled with this anecdote infused within Albert a deep hatred of warfare and capital punishment, values which would remain consistent throughout his life.

After her husband's death, Catherine Camus took her two sons to live in Belcourt, a poor suburb of Algiers with a large Arab population. Despite this difficult lifestyle,

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<sup>4</sup>Biographical information on Albert Camus has been taken largely from two major biographies: Patrick McCarthy's *Camus* (New York: Random House, 1982), and Olivier Todd's *Albert Camus: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

Albert would draw upon fond memories of his youth in Algiers. His love of the land has been conveyed in his literature with an undying passion from *L'Etranger* (*The Stranger*) to *Le Premier Homme* (*The First Man*), his last, unfinished work. Camus' Algeria is a land of sun, warm breezes, and the pursuit of soccer, swimming, and leisure on the beaches of Algiers and Oran. Yet, as Patrick McCarthy states, French Algeria was a land of great ambiguities. For Camus,  *pied noir* society, while infused with a great zest for life, has a lingering fascination with death. This can be interpreted as being a result of Algeria's position on the periphery, closely tied to its American counterpart, the frontier society. *Pieds noirs* often made this connection in the twentieth century with the cinematic influx of American westerns.<sup>5</sup> Camus would later write in "The Minotaur, or Stopping in Oran":

For many reasons that have as much to do with economy as with metaphysics, one can say that Oranian style, if such a thing exists, finds clear and forceful expression in that singular edifice known as the *Maison du Colon*. Oran is scarcely lacking in monuments. . . . Yet they represent something imported. In this happy barbarity they are unfortunate traces of civilization. . . . Needing a building to house the innumerable agricultural organizations that provide the country a livelihood, they decided to erect it in the most solid materials, placing it at the center of the business district, a convincing representation of their virtues: *La Maison du Colon*. Judging from this building, these virtues are three in number: boldness of taste, love of violence, and a sense of historical

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<sup>5</sup>McCarthy, *Camus*, 45-70.

synthesis.<sup>6</sup>

Camus' allusion to "historical synthesis" should not be confused with Hegelian reasoning. What he intends to convey is the historical intermingling of culture in Algeria, a truly Mediterranean culture with roots in classical civilization.

For Camus, "True Mediterraneanism offers a harmony between man and the world." This mode of thought, Camus believes, has its roots in the pre-Socratic tradition, as opposed to post-Socratic philosophy, which became a "German heresy". McCarthy, drawing on Camus' Mediterraneanism, states:

The harmony between man and the world can only be brief and it cannot be prolonged by illusions about a sun-baked paradise. From the silence of the Algiers evenings, the *pieds noirs* must learn that they will die. They should not resign themselves; they should return to life with the zest of a prisoner who awaits the guillotine. Yet they should not live blindly and should not try to postpone their own deaths by slaughtering others. The moralist in Camus rebukes excess; pride leads man to face his condition lucidly.<sup>7</sup>

This curious mixture of fatalism and a lust for life describes Algerian *piéd noir* society perfectly, for those Algerians of whom Camus speaks lived a surreal existence. Camus' Mediterraneanism belies the concrete reality of the Arab and Berber majority in Algeria. This is not to say that

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<sup>6</sup>"The Minotaur, or Stopping in Oran," in Albert Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 123-124.

<sup>7</sup>McCarthy, *Camus*, 69.



Camus was indifferent to the native population. He recognized the fissures within Algerian society and did his best to reconcile the inequalities among Algerians as a whole. The fatalism inherent in this philosophy might also be traced to Camus' own problems with tuberculosis, which he contracted as a boy. Frequent bouts of tubercular fever and painful treatments would often afflict him but, shrugging it off as "the flu", Camus used his illness to bring a sense of urgency and vitality to his own work.

Later critics, such as Connor Cruise O'Brien and Edward Said, have faulted Camus for his Mediterraneanism, viewing it as detached from the realities of colonial oppression.

O'Brien goes so far as to say that,

. . . when a brilliantly intelligent and well-educated man, who has lived his life surrounded by an Arabic-speaking population, affirms the existence of a form of unity including the Arabs and based on the Romance languages, it is not excessive to speak of hallucination.<sup>8</sup>

While certainly idealistic, Camus' philosophy was not a "hallucination," merely a reflection of the ways in which colonial life set itself apart from the metropole. As we will see, this philosophy was far from rigid, often changing and developing in the context of historical events and never complete. He would wrestle with this ideal of a Mediter-

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<sup>8</sup>Connor Cruise O'Brien, *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 11. See also Edward Said, "Camus and the French Colonial Experience" in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 169-185, who argues that Camus is a "representation of Western dominance" in Algeria.

anean culture in the pages of *Le Premier Homme* up to his death.

As a young man, Camus discussed the situation of Arabs and Berbers among his like-minded friends within the context of his own intellectual development. In deriving his own Mediterranean philosophy, Camus enjoyed the privilege of having sympathetic friends and teachers who shared his disdain for the poverty which afflicted Algeria's majority population. Jean Grenier, his high school philosophy teacher in Algiers, would serve as a mentor during his intellectual development. Grenier, while impressed with Camus' extraordinary aptitude, would later find that his pupil's methodology was not as focused as it could have been. Even at an early age, Camus could not confine himself to any single pursuit and as a result his writing displayed a lack of maturity. Two friends of his, Max-Pol Fouchet and Robert Jaussaud, recent arrivals from France, would join him in reading articles from the *NRF* (*Nouvelle Revue Française*). In the *NRF*, Camus became familiar with the authors of the day, including André Gide and André Malraux, whom he came to respect and emulate greatly.

Along with their discussions of the contemporary literary scene in Paris, Camus and his friends concerned themselves with the harsh racial and economic divisions within Algeria. One of these friends, Claude de Fréminville, joined the French Communist Party in 1934 and tried to

convince Camus to join as well. At the time, the Communist party was an attractive movement in the promotion of social justice, but when pressed by de Fréminville to join, Camus replied: "If I went towards communism, and it's possible I would, I'd put my vitality, power, and intelligence into it, I might put all my talent and soul, but not all my heart." Explaining this assertion, he stated: "I have a deep-seated attitude against religion, and for me, communism is nothing if not a religion."<sup>9</sup> Camus did not have an intricate knowledge of Marxism and it is unlikely that at this point he ever read *Das Kapital* or any other book by Marx or Engels in their entirety. He was, however, quite familiar with the local political situation in Algeria and the debates in France concerning Marxism and communism.

Camus finally did join the Communist Party in 1935, not to inspire a revolution, but simply he ". . . saw it as a way to fight inequalities between Europeans and 'natives' in Algeria. Since communism promised equality, Camus decided to be a Communist."<sup>10</sup> While this may seem a strikingly naive reason to commit oneself to the party, the PCF was truly the only progressive organization among *pie'd noir* society which could attract young idealists such as Camus. Inspired by the Party's anti-war stance and calls for economic justice, Camus became an activist, contributing articles, directing plays,

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<sup>9</sup>Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, 29.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

and organizing meetings, often coming into contact with the Party leaders. During this time, he decided to write seriously, modeling himself after Malraux, the epitome of a politically committed writer.

Camus also decided to become a teacher and studied at the University of Algiers under Grenier and René Poirier. Consistent with his own Mediterraneanism, Camus wrote his thesis on Plotinus and Saint Augustine, despite his scant familiarity with both the Greek language and Christianity. In his thesis, Camus tried to reconcile Greek thought and Christian faith, believing that the link could be found in his paper's subjects. More important was the fact that both Plotinus and Augustine were African, yet closely tied to European civilization. In a way, Camus' thesis topic reinforces his assertions about Algeria's role as a European frontier.

After finishing his degree, Camus focused on his writing despite the distractions of several menial jobs and his persistent tuberculosis. While on a visit to Europe, he composed the framework for *La Mort heureuse* (*A Happy Death*) and *L'Etranger*. He felt that the atmosphere of Paris was conducive to creativity, yet his homesickness was at times unbearable. He soon returned to Algeria, where he was more comfortable.

By 1938, his activities with the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) had declined, due to the political failure of the

Blum-Viollette Plan, which would have enfranchised Algeria's Muslim elite. Also, Andre Gide's 1936 book, *Retour de l'URSS*, which criticized the Soviet failures in Russia, elicited a profound disappointment in Camus' hopes about communism. What alienated him further was the rift between the PCA and Messali Hadj's Algerian Popular Party (APP), which focused primarily on the affairs of Algeria's Muslims and the liberation of the Algerian territory. In 1937, the APP staged several successful strikes and Hadj was deported for agitation. That the PCA tried to discredit Hadj for his violations of the party line disturbed Camus and he lent his support to the APP, despite its nationalist undertones. When pressure from the PCF came to bear on Camus himself, he quit the Party, never to return.

He remained busy, publishing *L'Envers et l'endroit*, a collection of essays and prose poetry, in 1937 to lukewarm reviews. In these essays, Camus reflected upon life in Algiers and "the lessons of the sun and the land where I was born." He also founded the Théâtre du Travail, for which he wrote his first play, *Révolte dans les Asturies*. Thwarted in the attempt to become a teacher due to his illness, Camus took an editorial post at the newly formed *Alger Républicain*, a liberal newspaper headed by Pascal Pia, former editor of *Ce Soir*, a Parisian communist daily.

The stated mission of *Alger Républicain* was to serve as a foil to "the traveling salesmen of fascism, and industrial,

agrarian, and banking feudalism," as well as "the social conservatism that tries to keep our native friends on an inferior level."<sup>11</sup> While Camus did not wish to devote all his energy to journalism, he produced some lasting work in the pages of *Alger Républicain*. Recognized by Pia as the most talented writer on staff, Camus was assigned to write articles on crime and poverty in Algeria. One of his most notable articles, entitled "Misère de la Kabylie" (June, 1939), exposed the effect of poverty and famine on the Kabyle population in Algeria<sup>12</sup>. It is important to note that the tone adopted in this article is one of reform, not revolution. Camus believed that the increasing rift between *colon* society and the Algerian peasantry could be remedied within the colonial administration, and that it was not too late to reach out to Algeria's native population. What Camus argued for was a commitment by the French to live up to their stated goals within the colonial enterprise—the rhetoric of equality toward colonial subjects, long espoused by advocates of French colonialism had to be authenticated through action. As with his vocal support for the Blum-Viollette Plan, Camus' entreaties for a just solution fell on deaf ears, as most of the *pieds noirs* and rich *colons* were unwilling to forfeit any advantages they had over the Muslim population. Given the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>12</sup>Albert Camus, "Misere de la Kabylie," in *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 905-938.

overwhelmingly conservative nature of the ruling *colons*, and coupled with a worldwide economic depression, these political failures not surprising.

At this same time, Camus and his colleagues at *Alger Républicain* grew concerned over the mounting tensions in Europe occasioned by the rise of Fascism and Nazism. Of particular concern was the growing anti-Semitism, reflected in the streets of Algiers by Camus' friends and relatives. There had been a significant Jewish population in Algeria since its annexation by France in the 1830s and, as in Europe, Algerian Jews were the frequent target of grievances. Camus' uncle Étienne would frequently blame Jews for his own troubles "as if by reflex". Local problems took a back seat to European events as on September 3, 1939, France and Britain declared war on Nazi Germany for violating the Munich Pact. The French Empire was now at war.

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Across the Atlantic, on July 20, 1925, Frantz Fanon was born on the island of Martinique, a French colonial holding in the West Indies.<sup>13</sup> The fifth of eight children, Frantz was the son of a customs inspector and part of the growing black bourgeoisie of Fort-de-France. His family was bourgeois only

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<sup>13</sup>Biographical information on Frantz Fanon has been gleaned largely from David Caute's *Frantz Fanon*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1970); Peter Geismar's *Fanon*, (New York: The Dial Press, 1971); and Irene L. Gendzier's *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study*, (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

in the respect that his parents were among the four percent of black families who could afford to send their children to the *lycée*.

The social structure in Martinique was closely tied to racial and cultural factors. Lowest on the scale were the *noirs*, or Creole-speaking descendants of slaves, used for arduous agricultural work. The *noirs* were largely uneducated, politically unaware, and kept docile by the availability of cheap rum throughout the island. Next were the *sang-meleés*, or mixed-blood urban middle class, of which the Fanons were members. *Sang-melées* were educated in the French colonial fashion and often held bureaucratic posts or owned small businesses. They attempted to emulate the *békés*, the white colonial elite, who were the closest approximation to metropolitan France, the ideal state for a Martinican to achieve.

Education in Martinique stressed French identity. Among the first words Frantz Fanon learned to read and write were "*Je suis Français*." A prominent feature of the French colonial system was the idea that the subjects of its empire were to be raised as Frenchmen. Those in a position of authority believed that this emphasis on French culture and history set their "civilizing mission" apart from the colonial policies of other nations. Reiterated throughout the empire was the notion that French colonialism was the most humane and least racist among the great imperial powers.



In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," Homi K. Bhabha writes of the "civilizing mission":

. . . colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. . . . Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers.<sup>14</sup>

What Bhabha describes is the fundamental flaw in colonial education, the imperfections which lead, inevitably to alienation and revolt by the educated native bourgeoisie. While in the instance of Fanon, this might seem to fit due to his later status as a revolutionary, it is not quite accurate. Until dramatic historical events changed his stance, he grew up with the idea that he was becoming a Frenchman.

The first challenge to Fanon's perceptions of his position in French society was the time he spent as a student of Aimé Césaire, the black West Indian poet and playwright. Césaire had been the co-founder of the Negritude movement, a philosophy of culture which celebrated the African origins of blacks of the diaspora. Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, published in 1939, created a scandal in

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<sup>14</sup>Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.

Martinique, a land in which racial pride was all but absent. While teaching at the Lycée Schoechler, Césaire confronted his students with this reassessment of racial hierarchy in his classes on language and literature. For Fanon, who had always been admonished by his mother to "stop acting like a nigger" when he misbehaved, Césaire's words were eye-opening. He remembers the local reaction to the *Notebook* upon its publication:

For the first time a lycée teacher . . . was seen to announce quite simply to Antillean society that it is fine and good to be a Negro. To be sure, this created a scandal. It was said at the time that he was a little mad and his colleagues went out of their way to give details as to his supposed ailment. . . . Neither the mulattoes nor the Negroes understood this delirium.<sup>15</sup>

While Césaire was shunned in his homeland, the negritude movement was being embraced by Europe's left-wing intellectuals and artists. Jean-Paul Sartre's 1948 essay "Orphée Noir" sought to explain the occurrence of black poetry and to uncover the source of its inspiration. As one scholar explains:

His approach was to present the problem in terms of the question why the European proletariat could not produce such artistic work. His answer to this entailed making a clear distinction between the *objective* and *subjective* situations of the black and the metropolitan working classes. Although in objective terms the oppression experienced by the blacks is similar to that of the European working class, subjectively it is vastly different. The white proletariat, unlike its colonised equivalent, does not suffer the internal or psycho-

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<sup>15</sup>Frantz Fanon, "West Indians and Africans," in *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove, 1968), 21-22. Originally published in *Esprit*, February 1955.

logical contradictions which, according to Sartre, are the source of all poetry.<sup>16</sup>

Fanon, although initially impressed with Césaire's bold challenge to conventional wisdom and later with Sartre's analysis of black poetry, found negritude to be reductionist and, more troubling, subject to the same type of racial stereotyping it decried. Fanon's relationship with Césaire and negritude would undergo many changes throughout his life, attesting to the complexities of colonial literature and colonial culture.

During his studies at the *lycée*, Fanon familiarized himself with the works of great European philosophers such as Nietzsche and Hegel. Nietzsche, in particular, proved to be a lasting influence on the young student. As Peter Geismar notes:

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* he [Fanon] saw the superman as one who is not crippled by an excess of reasons for not acting. One who still knows passion, but is able to control it. One who stands above the masses by his ability to throw off the shackles of conventional morality and religion. One who has ideas and the will to carry them out.<sup>17</sup>

That Fanon would later open his medical school dissertation with a quote from Nietzsche attests to his commitment to the philosopher and his ideals. The life that he would subsequently lead, further proves this commitment.

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<sup>16</sup>Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Clinical Psychology and Social Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 10.

<sup>17</sup>Geismar, *Fanon*, 11.

As his studies in the *lycée* progressed, events in Europe came to occupy the thoughts of Fanon and his countrymen. The outbreak of the Second World War and the defeat of the French metropole weighed heavily on the citizens of Martinique, as the mother country succumbed to German occupation and Vichy rule. Exacerbating this anxiety was the occupation of Martinique in 1940 by a portion of the French Atlantic fleet, led by Admiral Georges Robert, a Vichy collaborator. The 10,000 French sailors who descended upon the island increased the white population by 500% and brought an attitude of overt racism with them. Blockaded by the Allied fleet, the French navy had no choice but to make the occupation of Martinique an extended shore leave, lasting about three years. The island was quite unprepared for this influx of sailors. The resources of Fort-de-France were overrun by the new inhabitants, who commandeered the shops, cafés, and whorehouses of the port, pushing aside the native inhabitants. The French troops did not recognize the economic or social distinctions among the black population of Martinique and treated all of them with contempt. Almost without exception, every black male was considered a servant, every black woman a prostitute. To every Martinican, this was not the France they learned of in school, but an evil impostor.

Rather than attribute this behavior to white racism in general, Fanon viewed it as symptomatic of Vichy collaboration and, encouraged by Free French radio broadcasts,

decided to join the Maquis in 1942. Along with his friends Marcel Manville and Mosole, Fanon made the perilous journey to Dominica, the location of a Free French training center. While stationed there, the United States announced an economic embargo on the Antilles, cutting off the supply line to the Vichy fleet, which soon sued for peace in the early months of 1943. Fanon and his friends triumphantly returned to Martinique and soon answered Charles DeGaulle's call to carry on the war against Germany on the continent. One of Fanon's philosophy professors questioned Fanon's decision, claiming that the war was not theirs and that aiding the effort to liberate France reinforced colonized black people's servitude. To this, Fanon replied: "Each time liberty is in question, we are concerned, be we white, black, or yellow; and each time freedom is under siege, no matter where, I will engage myself completely".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 29.

## Chapter 2: Resistance and Rebellion

For both Camus and Fanon, World War II proved to be a momentous occasion in each man's intellectual and ideological development. The period of French resistance to German occupation was a battleground of conflicting ideologies and visions of what France would become after the war. Young idealists when they entered the Resistance, Camus and Fanon hardened their political views in the period after the liberation of France. In finding faults within the same culture they had committed to defend, they adopted different stances of revolt, Camus with his literature, Fanon with political tracts and open warfare. Their experiences with French Resistance became a proving ground for not only themselves, but for French culture in general. The lessons of the Resistance were thus the turning point in each man's view of the world.

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In 1939, at the outset of war, Albert Camus signed up for service with the French army but was denied entrance due to his medical condition. In his *Carnets* (Notebooks), he wrote:

" . . . Remember the first days of what will probably be a highly disastrous war as days of immense happiness—a strange and instructive destiny. . . . I am seeking reasons for my revolt which nothing has so far

justified. . . ."19

Frustrated in his attempt to defend France on the battlefield, Camus busied himself with work for the newly created *Le Soir Républicain*, an organ of *Alger Républicain*, which he would edit exclusively. *Le Soir* was a small paper dedicated to accurate reportage on the war, yet Camus received his news from the same sources as the other Algerian dailies. Its first issue reported that the Soviet Union would join Germany in dividing Poland, which did happen, but also reported that Hitler would abdicate as *Führer* to a life of literature and fine art, which certainly did not.<sup>20</sup>

While editing the paper, Camus tried to resume work on *L'Etranger* and his essay on the absurd, but the long hours and small staff at *Le Soir* proved to be less than conducive to his literary ambitions. Camus found himself to be writing most of the articles for the paper, which, in wartime was especially taxing. Constantly battling with censorship, which was more pronounced in Algeria than on the continent, Camus and Pascal Pia probed the causes of the war and its avoidability. Throughout 1939, *Le Soir Républicain* published several historical critiques of the Versailles treaty and Hitler's claims for land leading up to the Polish invasion. Camus alienated many of his communist friends with his

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<sup>19</sup>Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1935-1951* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1998), 138.

<sup>20</sup>Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, 88.

criticism of the Soviet Union's non-aggression pact with Germany. On December 13, 1939 he wrote, "at present, everything leads us to believe that the Soviet Union is now an imperialist power" and that "Today the USSR can be classed among the countries that prey on others."<sup>21</sup>

Finally, on January 10, 1940, *Le Soir Républicain* was shut down by government officials for its pacifist (a term which was linked at the time with communism) views. Now Camus was free to work on his other projects, including the play *Caligula*. Pascal Pia left for France to find work and Camus retired to Oran to be with his fiancée, Francine Faure, and to work as a tutor. Unable to find gainful employment because of his political views, Camus joined Pia in Paris to work as a typesetter for *Paris-Soir*, a newspaper that he viewed as one step above tabloid journalism. For only five hours of work a day, though, the pay was good and he had the time to write on his own. While in Paris, he had the chance to meet André Malraux, his literary idol, and inspired, continued with his drafts of *L'Etranger* and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*.

As the German army closed in on Paris, Camus had to leave his job and retreat south to Bordeaux and Lyons. As the Vichy government, led by Marshal Philippe Pétain was installed, *Paris-Soir* was reopened as a collaborationist

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 89-90.



organ. Camus was offered his old job, but refused and left for Oran, marrying Francine Faure on the way, who joined him in Lyons. He used this time to finally complete *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, while teaching at a private school and being supported financially by Francine's family. Camus shared a love-hate relationship with the city of Oran, which he viewed a culturally poor, but rich in beauty. The story of an incident between his friend Pierre Galindo and a group of Arabs on the beach at Bouisseville served as inspiration for the plot of *L'Etranger*, and the city itself would be the setting of his resistance parable *La Peste* (*The Plague*).

Vichy politics had rekindled anti-Semitism in Algeria. Some of Camus' Jewish friends lost their jobs, and with the abolition of the Crémieux decree, 111,021 Algerian Jews lost their French citizenship. Most European Algerians supported the Vichy government, making Camus' presence all the more unwelcome, especially when he helped organize a local chapter of the Gaullist Resistance.

After he completed *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, and later *L'Etranger*, Camus sent his drafts to Paris for review. Through correspondence with Pia and Malraux, who read his manuscripts, Camus was able to publish *L'Etranger* in May of 1942 through the Gallimard publishing house, which also printed the NRF, now a collaborationist review. With support from a figure like Malraux, Camus' novel was awarded with a large printing and many reviews in the French press.

*L'Etranger* is a novel which is difficult to fully appreciate outside of the Algerian context in which it was written. The story of a *pied-noir* who, faced with the absurdity of life, murders an Arab confused many of its French readers. The hero, Meursault, is put on trial ostensibly for murder, but is convicted for his supposed indifference to the death of his mother at the beginning of the novel. The absurdity related by Camus is heightened when one knows of the situation in Algeria at the time. It is unlikely that a *pied-noir* would even face a trial for murdering an Arab, especially in self-defense. This subtle criticism of colonial jurisprudence was lost on the average metropolitan Frenchman, whose reaction to the novel was of a stylistic nature. "Kafka written by Hemingway" was a typical response. A Review by Jean-Paul Sartre, entitled "Explication de *L'Etranger*" described the novel as "dealing with death, the irreducible pluralism of truths and beings, the unintelligibility of the real world, and chance . . . , poles of the absurd. Truly these are not original themes."<sup>22</sup> In this review, Sartre high-handedly tells his readers what Camus actually means, despite his own ignorance of Camus' uniquely Mediterranean philosophy, and the complexities of Algerian life which produced it. For Camus' contemporary critics, Algeria was merely the setting for *L'Etranger*, a

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<sup>22</sup>Olivier Todd, "Camus and Sartre" in *Camus' L'Etranger: Fifty Years On*, Adele King, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 244.

European novel.

Edward Said's criticism of *L'Etranger*, in contrast to its earlier critics, views Camus' book as inseparable from its colonial setting. Said argues that "To resituate *L'Etranger* in the geographical nexus from which its narrative trajectory emerges is to interpret it as a heightened form of historical experience."<sup>23</sup> With regard to Meursault's "ceremony of bonding" with the land and sea of Algeria, a theme repeated in Camus' other works, Said argues that "these ceremonies become foreshortened, highly compressed commemorations of survival, that of a [*pied noir*] community with nowhere to go."<sup>24</sup> Said faults Camus for Meursault's acceptance of his fate at the end of *L'Etranger*, implying that Meursault's resignation to the judgement of an absurd court indicates Camus' acceptance of the colonial regime in Algeria. While Said's assertion that Camus belongs to the body of colonial literature is a valid one, his analysis of *L'Etranger* belies the real contributions Camus had made for the reform of colonial policies in his homeland.

*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, his essay on the absurd, reveals more about Camus' moral vision at the time. He returned to France for its publication, taking a paid position at Gallimard and an active role in the resistance movement. In this collection of essays, Camus explores the manifestations

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<sup>23</sup>Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 185.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 184.

of nihilism. Camus' absurd ethic is characterized by a metaphysical revolt against the meaninglessness of the world and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* urges its readers to protest their situation and their ultimate fate, death, not by suicide or violence, but by leading full lives, unlimited by moral codes or other restrictions:

Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death—and I refuse suicide. I know, to be sure, the dull resonance that vibrates throughout these days. Yet I have but a word to say: that it is necessary.<sup>25</sup>

This negation of conventional morality and dynamic interaction with the world, echoes the Nietzsche of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. As with Fanon, Camus would use elements of the German philosopher in shaping his world view. In his essays on Don Juan, Dostoyevsky, and Kafka<sup>26</sup>, he explores the origins of this metaphysical revolt within the great works of European literature.

By the time of its publication in 1942, Camus' philosophy in *Le Mythe de Sysiphe* had outdated him. Now an active member of the Resistance network *Combat*, he had modified his ideas about revolt. The nature of the struggle against the

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<sup>25</sup>Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 64.

<sup>26</sup>The essay on Kafka was omitted from the original edition of *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* because Kafka was a Jew, and hence repugnant to the sensibilities of occupation censors. This essay would be included in later editions of the book.

Nazis and the utter brutality the members of the Resistance faced, led Camus to believe that true revolt protested not only the world's lack of meaning, but the world's lack of justice as well. This form of justice would cause a brief reversal of his position on violence, which he believed could be justified under extraordinary circumstances.

Cut off from Algeria by the November, 1942 Allied invasion of North Africa, Camus joined the editorial staff of *Combat*, the Resistance newspaper in the summer of 1943. Between the time of the Allied offensive and the time he joined *Combat*, Camus began to come to terms with the absurdist ethic in his "Letters to a German Friend". Using the literary device of four letters written to a former comrade, Camus describes how the absurd led the Germans and the French Resistance to take different forms of action. Rather than rebelling against the cruelty and chaos of the world, the Germans lived by its rules by deifying the state. In his fourth letter, he wrote:

You supposed that in the absence of any human or divine code the only values were those of the animal world—in other words, violence and cunning. Hence you concluded that man was negligible and that his soul could be killed, that in the maddest of histories the only pursuit for the individual was the adventure of power and his own mortality, the realism of conquests.<sup>27</sup>

The experience of German occupation hardened Camus' political views and when he assumed the post of editor of

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<sup>27</sup>Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion and Death* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 27.

*Combat*, the change in his tone is stunning. Although the authorship of its articles during the occupation has not been firmly established due to the necessity of secrecy, *Combat* took a revolutionary approach to the expulsion of the Nazis and their French collaborators. A May, 1944 editorial on the Ascq massacre in northern France declared,

The question is not whether these crimes will be pardoned, but how they will be punished. . . . From now on, punishment for these crimes is the responsibility of the French people who, because of this massacre will discover the solidarity of martyrdom and the power of vengeance.<sup>28</sup>

From the beginning, the Resistance leadership saw its struggle as revolutionary and ideological. A *Combat* manifesto in 1942 called for a revolution in France after the war, stating: "Our task will not end with the liberation of territory. Beyond that we want to rebuild France. We want to support the necessary contribution of France to Europe and the rest of the world."<sup>29</sup> Camus agreed with this line, which advocated a socialist government, broad economic and social reforms, and punishment for those responsible for the collapse of 1940, as well as those who benefitted from the French defeat. Although Camus did not have a particular party affiliation at this point, the socialism he advocated was of the type that would reverse the mistakes of the weak

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<sup>28</sup>Albert Camus, *Between Hell and Reason: Essays from the Resistance Newspaper Combat, 1944-1947*, Alexandre de Gramont, ed. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

coalition governments which he felt led to the conquest of France by Germany.

When France was liberated in August of 1944, *Combat* moved above ground and supported the insurrection by the French people against the Germans and conspicuous collaborators. Camus, who could now attach his name to his editorials, advocated the maintenance of the Resistance spirit and the beginning of a new revolution in France. In his editorial of September 19, he described how revolt turns to revolution:

Revolution is not revolt. What carried the Resistance for four years was revolt—the complete, obstinate, and at first nearly blind refusal to accept an order that would bring men to their knees. Revolt begins first in the human heart. But there is a time when revolt spreads from heart to spirit, when a feeling becomes an idea, when impulse leads to concerted action. This is the moment of revolution.<sup>30</sup>

This passage anticipates Camus' later assessment of revolution in *L'Homme Revolté* (*The Rebel*), albeit under radically different circumstances. At this point, optimism for a new social and political order was at its peak, but the illusion of revolutionary transformation would prove to be temporary.

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For Frantz Fanon, the experience of resistance sowed the seeds of doubt about France that had been planted by Césaire's negritude and by the occupation of Martinique.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 55.

Fanon wrote little about his experiences in the war, but through the testimony of Manville and Mosole, biographers have been able to flesh out the concrete experiences which transformed Fanon from a loyal French citizen into a rebel against the values he grew up with.

His disillusionment began with the sea journey from Martinique to North Africa. The Antillean volunteers were often discriminated against by the French crew of the *S.S. Oregon* during the month-long voyage. To ease the tension in the cramped, unsanitary quarters, the three friends joked about the similar way their ancestors arrived in the Antilles, declaring their refusal to disembark south of the Sahara. But humor only went so far. A crisis erupted when several of the French sailors requisitioned the "services" of the female volunteers on board. Coupled with the meager rations they were receiving, this latest humiliation escalated almost toward a race riot. Fanon began to revise the idea that this behavior was unique to the Vichy collaborators.<sup>31</sup>

The *Oregon* arrived in Casablanca without incident, however, and Fanon, Manville, and Mosole found themselves stationed in Guercif, Morocco, which was under French control at the time. Not much happened in Guercif, a dry, remote outpost in the Atlas Mountains, allowing time for the three

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<sup>31</sup>Peter Geismar, *Fanon*, 31.



friends to observe the new racial dynamics of North Africa.

Geismar writes that,

Fanon observed within the troops stationed at Guercif that there were noticeable barriers between the French from the metropolitan territory and the settlers in North Africa; both groups, though, looked down on the Moslems in the army, who didn't care for the blacks. Fanon's company of soldiers, from Martinique, held aloof from the African troops, especially the Senegalese. . . . There were special rations given to the Africans--vegetable crops harvested in West Africa. The Antilleans were allowed European food. Sometimes the supplies were so low, however, that all of the soldiers were treated to the delicacy of dried camel skin.<sup>32</sup>

The Antillean soldiers wore distinctive berets, a symbol of cultural assimilation with the whites, while the Africans wore conspicuously non-Western costumes. The berets made little difference to the white soldiers. The Antilleans found that without their berets they were treated as savages and with them as domesticated servants. As Manville angrily recounts:

The French subjected us with everyday humiliation in the ranks. Even if we wore the berets, the lesser ranked officers of the French army who were cretins, imbeciles, and fossils . . . tu-tued us [addressed us informally] as if we were Senegalese and, for us, to be addressed in such a way was humiliating.<sup>33</sup>

Partially out of boredom, and partially out of protest, Fanon, Manville, and Mosole committed minor infractions in a competition to earn the worst military record without going to jail.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>33</sup>Marcel Manville, as quoted in: Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 25.

In the Summer of 1944, while the three Martinicans were stationed in Bougie, Algeria, a call went out for volunteers to participate in the allied invasion of southern Europe. Fanon, Manville, and Mosole were the only three soldiers to step forward. In August, 1944, Fanon and his friends participated in the Ninth Division of Colonial Infantry's invasion of the Côte d'Azur as a mopping-up action, which involved little action with the German Army. Occasional raids by German scouts, however, kept the troops alert. They advanced north through Lyons and Dijon, where the fighting became more intense. By the fall, orders went out to "bleach" the division and send the African troops back to the south; they could not be expected to endure the cold climate. The Antillean soldiers were more assimilated, it was argued, and could continue, despite Martinique and Senegal's similar climates. This struck Fanon as particularly absurd.

Separated from Manville and Mosole, Fanon's regiment came under heavy fire in the valley of the Doubs River, where they began to run out of ammunition. In a letter home, Fanon wrote:

It's been one year since I left Fort-de-France. Why? To defend an obsolete ideal . . . I doubt everything, even myself. If I don't return, if you learn one day of my death at the enemy's hands, console yourself, but never say: he died for a noble cause. Say: God called him back because this other false ideology, the shield of civilians and imbecilic politicians, should not inspire us any longer. I have fooled myself. Nothing here, nothing justifies this sudden decision to make myself the defender of a farmer's interests when he himself doesn't give a damn . . . I leave tomorrow,

having volunteered for a dangerous mission. I know that I will not return.<sup>34</sup>

Despite his prediction, Fanon successfully completed his mission to bring supplies and ammunition to his regiment's position, although he was injured badly by mortar shrapnel in his chest and shoulder and had to spend two months in a Lyons military hospital.

After the conclusion of Fanon's service, in February of 1945, Colonel Raoul Salan awarded Fanon the *Croix de guerre* for his "brilliant conduct". Ironically, Colonel Salan would later lead French forces against Algerian nationalists, creating the *Organisation Armée Secrète*, which vowed to destroy Algeria rather than accept Muslim rule. Along with his medal, he received a promotion to Corporal and a scholarship to study at a French university of his choosing. Bolstered by these honors, Fanon returned to Martinique as he still had to finish his studies at the *lycée*.

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During the period of liberation in Paris, Camus continued with his duties at *Combat*. He advocated the overthrow of the old rule, purging those who collaborated with the Germans. Several journalists and intellectuals joined in this sentiment, calling for an *épuration* of French society upon which the new order would be built. The most serious crimes of collaboration would be prosecuted under

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<sup>34</sup>Peter Geismar, *Fanon*, 39.

Article 75 of the French Penal Code, relating to military intelligence, or treason. During the course of the Resistance, many collaborators were summarily executed. After liberation, these duties were handed to the state, which refined the definition of "collaboration" into broad terms, but was by no means consistent. That most bankers and wealthy industrialists were spared the consequences of collaboration troubled Camus, for he believed that these people should be the first targets of the *épuration*. The intervention of DeGaulle prevented a major bloodletting in order to preserve some form of national unity and maintain a central authority. For the intellectuals, however, the *épuration* continued.<sup>35</sup>

Using the royal "we" as he usually did in his editorials, Camus wrote on September 19, 1944:

. . . for the moment we are satisfied, despite the sceptics and despite the uncertainty over the exact form revolution will take, that there exists in France the general desire for revolution. We do not, however, believe in definitive revolutions. All human effort is relative. The unjust law of history is that man makes enormous sacrifices for results that are often absurdly small. Even so, man reaches toward his truths; his progress may be slow, but we think it justifies all sacrifices.<sup>36</sup>

Among these sacrifices were the lives of French journalists and intellectuals who were perceived as collaborators, either

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<sup>35</sup>For a provocative study of the *épuration*, see Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 45-74.

<sup>36</sup>Albert Camus, *Between Hell and Reason*, 56.

by glorifying Vichy rule, or in some cases, remaining silent. The failure to formulate a definitive political direction gave the *épuration* an arbitrary character, as the intellectuals of the Resistance divided along ideological lines. Marxists criticized the socialists, who criticized the communists, who, in turn, objected to the Gaullists. Soon, the spirit of the Resistance and revolutionary change gave way to internecine squabbling and personal vendettas. Many of the leading intellectuals of France used the purges against their intellectual opponents.

A watershed moment in Camus' position on the purge was his journalistic debate with François Mauriac. Mauriac, a veteran of the Resistance and a liberal Catholic, objected to the execution of collaborationist intellectuals on moral grounds. Mauriac's columns in *Le Figaro* insisted that the conduct of the purge was one-sided and the press ignored the realities and characteristics of the French people, while exploiting the Resistance to further their own revolution. To this, Camus replied: "we tend to believe that the Resistance is France: what must a newspaper represent if not the resistance of the French people?"<sup>37</sup> He denied the homogeneity of the press in its aims and defended the conduct of the purge, stating that "the basic problem is to silence the mercifulness of which M. Mauriac speaks--for as long as

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 67.

truth remains in jeopardy. While it is true that this is difficult, one does not have to be a Christian to believe in the necessity of sacrifice."<sup>38</sup> In confronting the responsibility of death sentences for collaborators, Camus adopts a sense of realpolitik, shocking in its contrast to his former (and later) views on the death penalty:

We have no taste for murder. We respect human life more than anything in the world. Therefore our first reaction to the death penalty is repugnance. . . . But since 1939 we have truly learned *that not to destroy certain men would be to betray the good of this country*. France carries within itself a diseased body, a minority of men who yesterday brought France sorrow and continue to do so today. These are men of betrayal and injustice. Their very existence poses the problem of justice, for they constitute a living part of this country, and we must decide whether we will destroy them.[emphasis added]<sup>39</sup>

Camus argued that in Mauriac's argument, Christian charity was acceptable, given the final judgement of God. For atheists such as himself, however, justice needed to be enacted in the earthly realm.

The turning point in this debate occurred during the trial of Robert Brasillach, a notorious collaborator and anti-Semite. Brasillach had been charged with treason and sentenced to death for treason under Article 75 due in part to his predominance and literary talent. The court found that for a writer to hold treasonous views and encourage his readers to commit violent acts made him as guilty as though

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 72.

he had pulled the trigger himself. A petition, partially organized by Mauriac, circulated among the literary and journalistic community asking for clemency. Camus was only one of the few leftist intellectuals to sign, albeit after a "sleepless night". Up to that point, Camus dealt with matters of the purge in an almost abstract way, but faced with the responsibility over a man's death, could not follow through on his vows for vengeance. At this point, Camus began to reverse his position on the conduct of the *épuration*, restoring his previous views on capital punishment. For Camus' contemporaries, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, the execution of Brasillach could be justified in existential terms, suggesting that for Brasillach's life to have meaning, he should accept the consequences of his actions.<sup>40</sup> Camus, on the other hand, could not accept such an existential explanation. Despite the petition, De Gaulle refused clemency and Brasillach was executed for treason.

By August of 1945, Camus had reversed his position on the *épuration* completely, writing in *Combat*:

. . . it is now certain that the purge in France is not only a failure but also a disgrace. The word *épuration* is painful enough in itself. That which it describes has become hateful. It could have succeeded only if undertaken without vengeance or frivolity.<sup>41</sup>

Camus argued that the purge had lost all sense of proportion

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<sup>40</sup>Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 66.

<sup>41</sup>Albert Camus, *Between Hell and Reason*, 112.

and justice in the sentencing of certain intellectuals, citing the case of René Gérin, a pacifist who was sentenced to more years of hard labor than Albertini, a French recruiter for the German army. Camus did not acknowledge that the purge was unnecessary, yet the way it had been conducted caused him to reevaluate his position on revolution itself. He began working on *L'Homme Revolté* to flesh out the stand he had taken against the purge.

During his time at *Combat*, Camus briefly returned to the subject of Algeria, his homeland. Reacting to colonial minister René Pleven's call for the enfranchisement of natives within the French empire, Camus argued that in North Africa, "we must recognize that the worst obstacle will be the French population." Noting that many of the *pieds noirs* of Algeria supported Vichy policies, Camus believed that,

The government, to realize its politics of amity and protection toward the Algerians, must understand and reduce this resistance. . . . We will find support from our colonies only when we have convinced them that their interests are our interests and that we do not have contrary policies, one giving justice to the French people, the other consecrating injustice in our empire.<sup>42</sup>

This vague allusion to Algerian politics was the only public statement on colonial policy that Camus made in the pages of *Combat*. He would, in a sense, return to Algeria in his book *La Peste*, but primarily as the setting for a European parable.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 65.



Writing *La Peste* took Camus about five years, beginning during the period of German occupation in France. In the novel, one can clearly sense the evolution of Camus' philosophy of revolt. Set in Oran, *La Peste* tells the story of a mysterious plague which soon cripples the city, which is cut off from the rest of the world through a quarantine period. *La Peste* is a thinly-veiled morality tale about the occupation of France, where the plague represents nazism, and the rats who carry the plague represent the Germans.<sup>43</sup>

*La Peste* concerns a small group of men (Rieux, Tarrou, and Grand) who recognize the dangers of the plague when it first appears and, despite the indifference of the city's residents, begin a struggle against this new, terrifying enemy. They continue to fight the plague without knowing if their actions have any real consequences, yet they know to not do anything would make them accomplices to the suffering it causes. As the plague grows worse, more men join the fight, yet this group is still a minority. A journalist, Rambert, who, like Camus is cut off from his family during the plague/occupation joins the struggle. At the end of *La Peste*, when the plague is finally vanquished, there is much celebration, yet very few helped in the efforts to defeat it.

Critics of Camus, such as Connor Cruise O'Brien have

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<sup>43</sup>An excellent analysis of *La Peste* and its historical context can be found in Steven G. Kellman's *The Plague: Fiction and Resistance* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

pointed to the lack of Arab characters in *La Peste*, which is set in Algeria. Where the Arabs of *L'Etranger* were nameless, O'Brien argues, those of *La Peste* are virtually absent. He believes that this omission damages the credibility of the novel in several ways:

. . . it destroys the integrity of the conception of one of the central characters: the city itself. The city becomes a "never was" city, whereas we should be able to think of it as a real city under an imagined plague. The difficulty derives, I believe, from the whole nature of Camus' relation to the German occupiers, on one hand, and to the Arabs of Algeria on the other.<sup>44</sup>

O'Brien believes that Camus' omission of Arabs in *La Peste* is due to the author's inability to confront the fact that "the French were in Algeria by virtue of the same right that Germany was in France: the right of conquest." He adds that, "From this point of view, Rieux, Tarrou, and Grand were not devoted fighters of the plague: they were the plague itself."<sup>45</sup> While this is a fascinating point, O'Brien has privileged the setting of *La Peste* over its content.<sup>46</sup> That Camus' novel should be Eurocentric is not surprising, given the allegorical theme and the audience he was trying to reach. In Camus' later works, the complexity of his thoughts on the Algerian question would reveal itself. *La Peste* is

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<sup>44</sup>Connor Cruise O'Brien, *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa*, 54.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>46</sup>An excellent contemporary rebuttal to O'Brien's assertions can be found in David Carroll's article, "Camus' Algeria: Birthrights, Colonial Injustice, and the Fiction of a French-Algerian People," *MLN* 112 (1997): 519-526.

simply not a meditation on colonialism, as O'Brien would have his readers believe.

While mirroring his own experience as a Resistance journalist, *La Peste* also marks a change in Camus' notion of revolt. In *L'Etranger*, revolt is the struggle of the individual against absurdity to give his own life meaning in the face of death. Revolt in *La Peste* is a common struggle by individuals against a fate shared with other humans. Their efforts may be as futile as those of *L'Etranger's* Meursault, yet the possibility exists that they may improve their situation. Revolt, for Camus, had become a collective action, echoing his sentiments in *Combat* after the period of liberation.

As with *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, the publication of *La Peste* took place during a profound revision of Camus' philosophy of revolt. *La Peste* firmly established Camus as a giant on the French literary scene, despite Camus' own reservations about the novel. His new novel's success brought Camus into close contact with Jean-Paul Sartre, at that time the most prominent intellectual in France. Although Camus and Sartre differed in their own philosophies, they became friends, leading many to lump them together as "Sartre and Camus, the great existentialists". With his new fame, Camus was rewarded with financial security and the opportunity to

travel.<sup>47</sup> He left his post at *Combat* to concentrate on his new essay on revolt, which would prove alienating to his new friends and admirers in Paris.

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The postwar period, for Frantz Fanon, was a time for reflection and important decisions. He finished his exams at the *lycée*, while continuing his immersion in the philosophical works of Nietzsche, Hegel, Jaspers, and Kierkegaard. Fanon also gained an admiration for Jean-Paul Sartre, particularly his *Anti-Semite and Jew*, which would provide Fanon with a theoretical background for his study of race in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*). Along with his brother Joby, Fanon supported Aimé Césaire's candidacy for the parliament of the Fourth Republic. Although Césaire ran as a communist, Fanon was not enamored of communist ideology himself. Césaire's leadership, he felt, could improve the condition of Martinicans due to his growing prestige in Europe.

Fanon contemplated a life in drama, but his father's death in 1947 pressed him into more practical concerns. Seeking a profession which he could use in Martinique, he decided to become a dentist and enrolled in a Parisian dental

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<sup>47</sup>Camus' trip to the United States occasions an interesting coincidence in relation to this study. The ship on which he travelled across the Atlantic seems to have been the same *S.S. Oregon* which carried Frantz Fanon from Martinique to North Africa, based on its descriptions in Todd and Geismar's biographies of each man.

school, accompanied by Manville and Mosole who would study law. After three weeks in Paris, Fanon announced that he would leave for Lyons to study medicine. When Manville asked why, his friend sarcastically replied, "There are just too many niggers in Paris."

Fanon then explained that he had never met so many idiots in his life as in dentistry school. He couldn't tolerate it. It was worse than the *S.S. Oregon*, as boring as Guercif. He would rather go back to Bougie or the Valley of the Doubs.<sup>48</sup>

Fanon had friends in Lyons dating back to his days in the military hospital, where he played soccer with other recovering patients. Life in the provinces was cheaper than Paris, but less cosmopolitan. He would be forced to live almost exclusively in a white world.

While enrolled in medical school, Fanon would often involve himself in lengthy academic debates with his peers, write plays, and submit articles to local papers. He engaged himself tirelessly in all manner of activities and started a newspaper called *Tam-tam*, directed at the small minority of black students in Lyons. Although *Tam-tam* appeared only once, Fanon's writing gained the attention of several of his professors, alerting them to the difficulties faced by their Negro students in a white world. Fanon was hesitant to accept praise from his professors, including Francis Jeanson, a prominent intellectual, mainly because he felt that it

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<sup>48</sup>Peter Geismar, *Fanon*, 43-44.

implied his work was impressive simply because he was black and not in its own right. This hesitation was justified, due to the paternalism and condescension he experienced on a daily basis from these same men. Fanon would later remark: "When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked into an infernal cycle."<sup>49</sup> His professors and examiners would insult him with the familiar "tu" when addressing him, as well as trying to give him undeserved advantages over his peers because of his color. As David Cauter states:

The examination system at Lyons was for the candidate to plunge his hand into a basket and to pull out a question at random, but the examiner asked Fanon patronizingly, "What do you want me to question you about?" Fanon plunged his hand into the basket.<sup>50</sup>

Despite these difficulties, Fanon compiled an excellent academic record, specializing in psychiatry. He defended his medical thesis on neurological disorders in November, 1951, the same paper which included the Nietzsche quote. By all accounts, Fanon's thesis was a conventional medical study and did not live up to its Nietzschean introduction, yet his impressive defense of the paper earned him a medical degree.

Fanon's experience in Lyons became the backbone of his "sociodiagnostic" study of group racial identity, *Peau noire*,

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<sup>49</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967), 116.

<sup>50</sup>David Cauter, *Frantz Fanon*, 3-4.

*masques blancs*. Unlike his thesis, *Peau noire, masques blancs* offers a forceful, poetic, and highly personal account of Fanon's experience in a white world. It is also the most academic of Fanon's popular works. Drawing upon the works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Jacques Lacan, G.W.F. Hegel, Jean-Paul Sartre, and, above all, Aimé Césaire, Fanon's book argues that the juxtaposition of the black and white races has created a form of collective mental illness. Fanon seeks to explain the formation, meaning, and effects of "blackness" when confronted with white Europe.

Whereas Fanon had previously disagreed with Césaire's assertion that all Negroes share a common fate, believing that Antilleans could not possibly identify with the less cultured Senegalese, his experience in Lyons convinced him that his own assumptions were wrong. He now understood Césaire's own experience at the Sorbonne in Paris, where blacks are essentialized by their color and judged accordingly. *Peau noire, masques blancs*, as a consequence, overflows with quotations from Césaire and imitates the style of the Martinican poet. Drawing upon his own experience, Fanon poses the Freudian question: "What does a man want? What does the black man want?" His answer is devastatingly curt: "The black man wants to be white. The white man slaves to reach a human level. . . . The white man is sealed in his

whiteness. The black man in his blackness."<sup>51</sup>

Fanon explores the role language plays in the context of race. He asserts that the black man:

. . . will be proportionally whiter in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language . . . Yes, I must take great pains with my speech because I shall be more or less judged by it.<sup>52</sup>

While a black man's mastery of the colonizer's language may increase his acceptance by whites, it alienates him from his root culture, placing him in the no-man's land between the colony and the metropole.

The main thrust of Fanon's argument in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, is that the present state of race relations corresponds to colonialism. He critiques the arguments of Octavio Mannoni, whose *Prospero and Caliban: the Psychology of Colonization* describes the "dependency complex" among native populations. Mannoni argues that this dependency is latent among natives, thus making colonization a relatively painless procedure, beneficial to both parties involved. Fanon objects to this notion on psychological grounds, believing it is impossible to ascertain the pre-colonial mentality of natives after the fact of colonization. Fanon further objects to Mannoni's claims that French colonization is less racist than other forms, and that "European civilization and its best representatives are not responsible for

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<sup>51</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 8, 9.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 18, 20.



colonial racialism." To the first claim, Fanon replies:

I hope I may be forgiven for asking that those who take it on themselves to describe colonialism remember one thing: that it is utopian to try to ascertain in what ways one kind of inhuman behavior differs from another kind of inhuman behavior. . . . I should simply like to ask M. Mannoni whether he does not think that for a Jew the differences between the anti-Semitism of Maurras and that of Goebbels are imperceptible.<sup>53</sup>

Fanon then responds to Mannoni's second assertion, linking it with the first, by arguing:

Now I shall go further and say that Europe has a racist structure. It is plain to see that M. Mannoni has no interest in this problem, for he says "France is unquestionably one of the least racist-minded countries in the world." Be glad you are French, my fine Negro friends, even if it is a little hard, for your counterparts in America are much worse off than you. . . . France is a racist country, for the myth of the bad nigger is part of the collective unconscious.<sup>54</sup>

To prove his own argument, Fanon leaves Mannoni, and returns to his own experience in Lyons.

In his chapter entitled: "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon appropriates Sartre's concept of "the gaze" in *Anti-Semite and Jew* by applying it to Negroes. The central premise articulated by Sartre's essay lies in his argument that "The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew . . . it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew."<sup>55</sup> Fanon uses Sartre's concept to great effect in analyzing race relations. "The black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>55</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 69.

moment his inferiority comes into being through the other," Fanon writes, "and then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims."<sup>56</sup> Fanon illustrates the "myth of the bad nigger" in France through an anecdote in which he is accosted by a young boy and his mother. The boy cries out: "Mama, see the Negro! I'm Frightened!" A crowd develops and Fanon shrinks from their gaze:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored . . . The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, . . . the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up!<sup>57</sup>

The mother can only reply, "Look how handsome that Negro is!" to which Fanon, at a loss, replies: "Kiss the handsome Negro's ass, madame!", filling her with shame. To the white man, the Negro is essentialized within his race and accountable for the traditions of his race, the cannibalism, the tom-toms and the legacy of slavery. For the black man, anonymity is impossible in the white world, as he is defined by his color, the initial point of contact with the white man who, despite himself, will always draw attention to race. Fanon lists the all too familiar platitudes heard by the black man:

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<sup>56</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 110.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 112-114.

"Understand, my dear boy, color prejudice is something I find utterly foreign. . . . But of course, come in, sir, there is no color prejudice among us. . . . Quite, the Negro is a man like ourselves. . . . It is not because he is black that he is less intelligent than we are. . . . I had a Senegalese buddy in the army who was really clever. . . ." <sup>58</sup>

For Fanon, the black man would always be a foreigner in France, even if he were more educated or cultured than his peers.

Fanon then critiques Hegel's master/slave dialectic in the light of colonization. Hegel argues that this dialectic is a quest for recognition, in which the master receives his identity from the slave, who in turn receives his human identity through the master's withholding of freedom. A liberating synthesis, Hegel argues, results from a mutual recognition between the master and slave. Fanon's own description of colonial relationships differs markedly from Hegel's paradigm. Fanon argues that, "For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work." <sup>59</sup>

Although greatly indebted to Sartre for his insight into race prejudice, he disagrees with the philosopher's use of negritude in his Marxist-Hegelian historical dialectic as expressed in *Orphée Noir*:

At the very moment when I was trying to grasp my own

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 220n.

being, Sartre, who remained the Other . . . was reminding me that my blackness was only a minor term . . . Without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible to live my Negrohood.<sup>60</sup>

For Sartre, negritude was the moment of negativity in the pre-determined victory of the proletariat, where race will not matter. As the quote above illustrates, Fanon is outraged by this flippant assertion. Fanon was becoming more convinced that, contrary to Hegelian reasoning, the solution for colonized peoples might lay in taking freedom from the master and effecting a violent break. Unconvinced by the solutions offered by Europe's philosophers, Fanon ends his study by crying out: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!"

*Peau noire, masques blancs* in many ways mirrors the early writings of Camus, especially *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, his essay on the absurd. Confronted by the racism in France, Fanon was struck by the absurdity of being judged by the sole factor of race. Fanon, like Camus, stressed the importance of an individual, metaphysical revolt against this absurdity by living a life of action, echoing the Promethean exhortations of Nietzsche, who influenced both authors. Césaire's "psyche of ascent"<sup>61</sup> plays a large role in Fanon's thought and, although still critical of the "backward-looking" philosophy of negritude, he remains optimistic of

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>61</sup>Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact*, 37-41.

the individual's ability to rise out of his present condition. Like Camus, Fanon refuses to give in to despair and fights to improve man's condition.

*Peau noire, masques blancs* is thus the summation of Fanon's experience in the army and in Lyons. He had become alienated from the culture he wished to embrace. He decided that as soon as he finished his medical training, he would return to Martinique where the racial divisions were less severe and where he was not regarded as a permanent stranger.

Fanon did return to Martinique, but only for a brief stay. In 1952, he moved back to France to continue a residency program in psychiatry under Professor François Tosquelles at the Hôpital de Saint-Alban. Tosquelles' was a proponent of *thérapeutique institutionnelle*, a revolutionary approach to psychiatric care, which involved the communal therapy of patients within mental hospitals. Irene Gendzier notes that:

He [Tosquelles] took the position that the compartmentalization of medicine that marks specialization had weakened it. The psychiatrist was aware of this atomization, and it was part of his function to combat it. . . . He was concerned with the "physiology of expression," with the physiological and the psychic, the individual and the social dimensions of life.<sup>62</sup>

For Tosquelles, the therapy of mental patients should replicate the challenges of the outside world in order to effectively integrate patients back into society. Under the

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<sup>62</sup>Irene L. Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study*, 65.

tutelage of Tosquelles, Fanon immersed himself in the study of pathology, neurology, and forensic medicine, including the examination of actual patients. He became a staunch advocate of *thérapeutique institutionnelle* and presented a joint paper with Tosquelles at a medical conference.

Following his rigorous training, Fanon was awarded the prestigious title of *chef de service* in July, 1953, which qualified him to become a director of any psychiatric hospital in France or its territories. Fanon would have preferred to return to Martinique to practice psychiatry, but the facilities and resources in his homeland were inadequate for the type of work he wished to accomplish. Hoping to practice in French West Africa, he contacted Léopold Senghor, the noted negritude poet and a government official of Senegal. After receiving an inadequate response, he took a temporary post in Pontsoron, Normandy which left him dissatisfied, due to the dreary climate and lack of stimulating work. When an opening for a *chef de service* in Blida, Algeria appeared in an advertisement, Fanon immediately applied and was soon accepted. This decision would change his life in ways he could not have anticipated at the time. Fanon was primarily excited about the professional possibilities in Blida. He was not yet a revolutionary, but his experiences in Algeria would change him profoundly within a matter of months.

### Chapter 3: A Dialogue Among the Deaf in Algeria

As argued in the previous chapter, the consequences of World War II disillusioned both Camus and Fanon. For Camus, the excitement over a new revolution in France gave way to despair over the conduct of the purges and his disillusionment with the concept of revolution in general. Fanon's confrontation with French racism in the army and then in Lyons sparked an existential crisis leading to *Peau noire, masques blancs* and to the conviction that colonialism was behind the suffering of the Third World in general, and Negroes specifically.

What is striking in this comparison between Camus and Fanon is the way in which Camus' moral development anticipates that of Fanon. Camus' writings for *Combat* during the occupation reveal a single-minded determination to vanquish the German menace and all it stood for. This same determination characterizes Fanon's later writing for *El Moudjahid*, the FLN organ, in which he calls for an end to the French occupation of Algeria. At similar stages in their lives, Camus and Fanon stepped back from their earlier polemics and reappraised the strengths and weaknesses of revolutionary action. In *L'Homme Révolté*, Camus would discard the ideals of definitive revolutions, and retreat to his earlier Mediterranean philosophy of individual revolt and articulate the principles which would guide him through the

Algerian conflict. By comparison, Fanon's chapter on "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *Les Damnés de la terre* sounds a similar warning against the conduct of revolutionary action and the tendency of revolutions to betray themselves.

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A thorough discussion of Camus' *L'Homme Révolté* has been delayed until this point of the study because, although born out of Camus' disillusionment with events in Europe, his essay on revolt provides great insight into his political position regarding the Algerian revolution.

On May 27, 1950, Camus noted in his *Carnets*, "After *L'Homme Révolté*, free creation."<sup>63</sup> In writing his famous essay, Camus was exorcising the philosophical and moral demons which plagued him during the Resistance and the immediate post-war period. Along with the cynical uses his contemporaries made of their Resistance activities and the Brasillach controversy, Camus was dismayed by the events unfolding in Eastern Europe as the Soviet Union absorbed the countries on its western flank under communist rule. Wary of the Soviet Union and Stalin since André Gide's *Retour de l'URSS*, and later with the testimony of intellectuals such as Arthur Koestler, Camus came to doubt the validity of the Russian Revolution and to condemn its degeneration into

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<sup>63</sup>Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1935-1951*, Part II, 254.



authoritarian rule.

Camus' contemporaries, such as Sartre, De Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Francis Jeanson who wrote and edited *Les Temps Modernes*, a leftist review, preferred to remain silent about the abuses within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. To be critical of the USSR, they argued, would be to aid the forces of reaction. The purges and show-trials in the East could be explained away as necessary steps in the creation of a new socialist utopia. A conversation recorded in Camus' *Carnets* in 1946, involving Sartre, Koestler, and Malraux highlights this lack of criticism by the left. The issue is raised over the preference for a French alliance with the United States versus the Soviet Union in the new Cold War context. Koestler opens the argument by stating that he hates Stalin as much as Hitler and for the same reasons. Sartre replies that,

I cannot turn my moral values solely against the USSR. For it is true that the deporting of several million men is more serious than the lynching of a Negro. But the lynching of a Negro is the result of a situation that has been going on for a hundred years and more, and that represents in the end the suffering of just as many millions of Negroes over the years as there are millions of Cherkess deported.

Koestler counters Sartre by asserting, "as writers we are guilty of treason in the eyes of history if we do not denounce what deserves to be denounced. The conspiracy of silence is our condemnation in the eyes of those who come after us." Camus can simply contemplate "the impossibility

of determining how much fear or truth enters into what each man says."<sup>64</sup> For Camus the notion of an either/or choice between the ideologies of American capitalism or Soviet communism was absurd. He sought a third direction for Europe, an ideology which could incorporate socialist economic reforms with democratic politics—an ideology of moderation. He resited the Manichean mode of thought now present in Europe in which you were either an enemy or a friend to the Left. These were the questions of the time and Camus would endeavor to answer them by refusing the limited answers of his French contemporaries.

Published in 1951, *L'Homme Révolté* revealed to the world Camus' summation of his own political views and his final stance on revolt. It is an enormous and ambitious treatise which analyzes the various figures of historical and metaphysical revolt, including Sade, Saint-Just, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, the French Communists and Sartre. From his criticism of these figures, he resuscitates his own view on revolt articulated in *Le Mythe du Sisyphe* as well as his Mediterranean philosophy. Camus attempts to offer a resolution to the Cold War for Europe which would embrace his mantra of "neither victims nor executioners" which he adopted during his last year with *Combat*.

In his chapter on historical rebellion, Camus indicts

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Part II, 145-146.

the revolutions of the modern age, which have betrayed the ideal of individual revolt and argues that,

Every act of rebellion expresses a nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being. But one day nostalgia takes up arms and assumes the responsibility of total guilt; in other words, adopts murder and violence. The servile rebellions, the regicide revolutions, and those of the twentieth century have thus, consciously, accepted a burden of guilt which increased in proportion to the degree of liberation they proposed to introduce.<sup>65</sup>

Proceeding through the history of the regicides of the French Revolution, Camus describes how Saint-Just and Rousseau consecrated the overthrow of the *ancien régime* through the Terror and the guillotine. By overthrowing divine right, the "free-thinkers" of 1798 replaced the rule of God with the deification of reason. With the execution of Louis XVI, the Jacobins erected a new god, *The Social Contract*, and consummated the transfer of power with terror and violence against its dissenters. The French Revolution betrayed itself, Camus argues, because:

The bourgeoisie succeeded in reigning during the entire nineteenth century only by referring itself to abstract principles [*liberté, égalité, fraternité*]. Less worthy than Saint-Just, it simply made use of this frame of reference as an alibi, while employing, on all occasions, the opposite values. By its essential corruption and disheartening hypocrisy, it helped to discredit, for good and all, the principles it proclaimed.<sup>66</sup>

While Christianity was not destroyed by the French Revolution, religion was "dematerialized and reduced to the

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<sup>65</sup>Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 105.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 132.

theoretical existence of a moral principle."<sup>67</sup> The end for religious morals would come with the German thinkers of the nineteenth century.

According to Camus, "German nineteenth-century thinkers, particularly Hegel, wanted to continue the work of the French Revolution while suppressing the causes of its failure." He argued that Hegel "finished by substituting, for the universal but abstract reason of Saint-Just and Rousseau, a less artificial but more ambiguous idea: concrete universal reason."<sup>68</sup> Although Hegel's dialectical method of reasoning was conceived to lead to reconciliation, his methods were adopted by other thinkers for nefarious purposes, for example:

. . . the revolutionaries of the twentieth century have borrowed from Hegel the weapons with which they definitively destroyed the formal principles of virtue. All they have preserved is the vision of a history without any kind of transcendence, dedicated to perpetual strife and to the struggle of wills bent on seizing power.<sup>69</sup>

Camus then offers a critique of Hegel's master/slave dialectic, which he believes has narrowed the critical faculties of contemporary thinkers to view the history of the world in these terms. He believes Hegel to be a brilliant philosopher with truly noble goals, but as with many philosophers, he has only been partially understood:

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 135.

Although there was infinitely more in Hegel than in the left-wing Hegelians who have finally triumphed over him, he nevertheless furnished, on the level of the dialectic of master and slave, the decisive justification of the spirit of power in the twentieth century.<sup>70</sup>

The uses of Hegelian justifications for the acquisition of power, coupled with the teachings of Nietzsche or the theories of Marx, led to new and terrible forms of central authority. Camus believed that,

. . . the strange and terrifying growth of the modern State can be considered as the logical conclusion of inordinate technical and philosophical ambitions, foreign to the true spirit of rebellion, but which nevertheless gave birth to the revolutionary spirit of our time. The prophetic dream of Marx and the over-inspired predictions of Hegel or of Nietzsche ended by conjuring up, after the city of God had been razed to the ground, a rational or irrational State, which in both cases, however, was founded on terror.<sup>71</sup>

The embodiment of the "irrational State", Camus argues, can be found in Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, a criticism he leveled against the Nazis in his "Letters to a German Friend" while completing *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. While adopting the dynamism and aesthetic of Camus' idea of revolt, the Fascists and Nazis were overcome by nihilism, which produced terrible consequences.

Camus' main target in *L'Homme Révolté*, however, is the phenomenon of the "rational State" whose origins lie in the scientific prophecies of Marx. Here he returns to his early views on communism, which he had characterized as "if nothing

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 177.

else, a religion." Camus begins his critique by stating:

Marx is simultaneously a bourgeois and a revolutionary prophet. The latter is better known than the former. But the former explains many things in the career of the latter. A Messianism of Christian and bourgeois origin, which was both historical and scientific, influenced his revolutionary Messianism, which sprang from German ideology and the French rebellions.<sup>72</sup>

Marxism thus assumes the character of an earthly religion through the deification of man. Camus, however, does not reject Marx out of hand. He finds that Marx's analysis of the capitalist system brings to light the various contradictions and inequalities inherent in the pursuit of capital. In the vague assertion that the proletariat will overthrow its masters at the correct juncture of the historical dialectic, Marx's prediction has led to the problems of the twentieth century. The efforts of the true believers in the Marxist faith to speed up the materialist dialectic have perpetuated an ongoing disaster for humanity and a nullification of the individual. Camus flatly states that, "to put economic determination at the root of all human action is to sum man up in terms of his social relations. There is no such thing as a solitary man; that is the indisputable discovery of the nineteenth century."<sup>73</sup> This idea is the antithesis of Camus' Mediterranean man and his belief in the sanctity of individual revolt. Marx's betrayal of the spirit of revolt, Camus argues, has led to the institutionalization

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 199.

of violence under Lenin and Stalin, characterized by terror and show trials, which brought forth a new Caesar, as was the case with Germany under Hitler and Italy under Mussolini.

Camus believes that:

To escape this absurd destiny, the revolution is and will be condemned to renounce, not only its own principles, but nihilism as well as purely historical values in order to rediscover the creative source of rebellion.<sup>74</sup>

This assertion begs the question of what Camus considers the true values of revolt, which he answers at the end of *L'Homme Révolté*.

In his chapter, "Thought at the Meridian," Camus advocates moderation in the pursuit of revolt. Arguing that the utopian revolutions of the twentieth century have been political and ideological despite their rhetoric, Camus advocates a brand of revolutionary trade-unionism. Trade unions have been the only organizations to better the lives of laborers, he argues, thus rendering the Marxist historical dialectic almost obsolete. Small-scale revolt in the spirit of reform can avoid the catastrophes exercised by Stalinism and the pursuit of ideological purity. Here Camus returns to Mediterranean culture, which he believes understands the value of moderation, a value which has become alien to Europeans, especially in the context of the Cold War. He believes that:

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 251.

. . . historical absolutism, despite its triumphs, has never ceased to come into collision with an irrepressible demand of human nature, of which the Mediterranean, where intelligence is intimately related to the blinding light of the sun, guards the secret.<sup>75</sup>

For Camus, the Mediterraneans cannot exist in Europe in the present day, but it falls to them to save Europe from itself.

He argues that,

Thrown into the unworthy melting-pot of Europe, deprived of beauty and friendship, we Mediterraneans, the proudest of races, live always by the same light. In the depths of the European night, solar thought, the civilization facing two ways awaits its dawn. But it already illuminates the paths of real mastery.<sup>76</sup>

Camus does not present a clear plan for how a Mediterranean ethic will save Europe from itself. By combining the ideals of socialism, anarchism, and liberal democracy, Camus opens himself up to criticism as a gnostic political thinker. He leaves it to the reader to incorporate his ethical views into concrete political reforms. *L'Homme Revolte*, while a penetrating criticism of the intellectual trends of Europe, exerts virtually no prescriptive influence.

It soon becomes clear that what Camus meant by "After *L'Homme Révolté*, free creation," was his further pursuit of the Mediterranean ethic. His writings on this ethic which lay outside of Europe would consume the rest of his career and guide his actions during the Algerian war.

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 300.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.



When he arrived in Blida in November of 1953, Frantz Fanon made an immediate impact. The hospital to which he had been assigned continued the practice of placing its patients in straitjackets and chaining them to their beds. On top of this, Blida was horribly overcrowded and admittance to the hospital was based, not on need, but on whether a patient was a European or an Arab. For Fanon to practice communal psychiatry in the way Tosquelles had trained him, the Blida-Joinville psychiatric institution would have to undergo sweeping changes. On his first day as *chef de service*, Fanon walked from ward to ward, unchaining the patients and talking to each of them as equals. The doctors and nurses on staff were simultaneously impressed and frightened by the new doctor's boldness. Fanon declared that racial distinctions were no longer relevant in the treatment of patients, and that European and Arab patients would participate in the same group therapy.

Most of the doctors in Blida resented the changes Fanon was making to the status quo, feeling that European techniques did not apply to the "mentally inferior" Arab patients within the hospital. The practice of psychiatry in Algeria had a long history, almost as long as the European presence in the colony. The "Algiers School" of colonial medicine had established the norm for treatment of the Arab majority, asserting that the Arabs were mentally inferior to Europeans and hence not entitled to a full range of

treatment. Doctor A. Porot, the chief advocate of the Algiers School, "characterized the Muslim as a liar, thief, and idiot, who was lazy, hysterical, and impulsively homicidal."<sup>77</sup> The unwillingness among doctors to treat Arab and Berber patients rested on Porot's racist theories.

Hussein Bulhan notes that,

Doctor Porot was thus the French counterpart to Doctor Carothers who, after fifteen years of service to the British Empire, authoritatively asserted that the African was a "lobotimized Western European."<sup>78</sup>

Fanon, in an article written in 1952, before Blida, explained this problem as being a part of the social barriers between French doctors and North African natives. He explains:

That the attitude of medical personnel is very often an *a priori* attitude. The North African does not come with a substratum common to his race, but on a foundation built by the European. In other words, the North African, spontaneously, by the very fact of appearing on the scene, enters into a pre-existing framework.<sup>79</sup>

This confrontation of cultures and languages causes misunderstanding and frustration between doctor and patient, often leading to a conclusion that the North African patient, unable to specify his problem, is imagining his ailment.

Fanon sought to reverse this trend through modifications in communal therapy. He organized activities among the patients of Blida-Joinville such as newsletters and other

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<sup>77</sup>Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 220.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>79</sup>Frantz Fanon, "The 'North African Syndrome,'" in *Toward the African Revolution*, 7.

creative forms of expression. He noticed that despite his integration of Europeans and Arabs in the same activities, the patients would segregate themselves after the therapy. Furthermore, only the European patients seemed to be responding to the therapy he prescribed, while the Arabs and Berbers withdrew from activities. Fanon would have to rethink the nature of the reforms he undertook in Blida.

In his years at Blida, Fanon began to sympathize with the movement for Algerian independence. When he arrived, tensions had already manifested themselves in the form of isolated terrorist incidents against the European population. The Sétif massacre of May, 1945 was emblematic of the irreconcilable differences between Europeans and native Algerians. A Muslim uprising in that town, in which several Europeans lost their lives was answered by a two-week retaliation by the French army involving aircraft and artillery, killing hundreds of Kabyle Muslims. With the outbreak of the organized FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) uprising on November 1, 1954, Fanon threw his support behind the tenets of Algerian independence.

For two years, Fanon would treat wounded guerrillas in the hospital, hiding them from the authorities. The mostly Arab male nurses of Blida-Joinville, who enjoyed an active role in Fanon's reforms, would aid him in treating wounds and smuggling medicine to the FLN. Fanon convinced himself that the continued hegemonic presence of Algeria's European

minority made his treatment of native Algerian patients nearly impossible. The repeated intrusions by French authorities into the hospital for purposes of interrogation reinforced his convictions about the Algerian situation. His treatment of Algerian nationalists after they had been tortured, as well as his treatment of police officers administering the torture convinced him of the need to end the colonial presence in Algeria and, in 1956, he resigned his post as *chef de service*.<sup>80</sup> His "Letter to the Resident Minister" illustrates his disappointment and frustration in practicing psychiatry in French Algeria:

For nearly three years I have placed myself wholly at the service of this country and the men who inhabit it. I have spared neither my efforts nor my enthusiasm. There is not a parcel of my activity that has not had as its objective the unanimously hoped-for emergence of a better world. . . . If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization.

Referring to the ongoing revolution, Fanon asserts that, "A society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable society, a society to be replaced."<sup>81</sup>

Following his resignation from Blida-Joinville, Fanon became an active member of the FLN and relocated to Tunisia, where the Algerian Provisional Government had its

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<sup>80</sup>Case studies of these patients make up the last chapter of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963)., 249-310.

<sup>81</sup>Frantz Fanon, "Letter to the Resident Minister," in *Toward the African Revolution*, 52-53.

headquarters. Like Camus with *Combat*, Fanon became a journalist for *El Moudjahid* (The Warrior), the FLN organ, where he would author editorials about the ongoing war for liberation, the problems of French colonialism, and the ineffectiveness of French intellectuals in contributing a meaningful dialogue on the war. Within the pages of *El Moudjahid*, Fanon shared his apocalyptic vision of post-colonial society not only in Algeria, but throughout Africa.

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The peace that Camus sought after the publication of *L'Homme Révolté* would not be forthcoming. Most initial reviews of Camus' book were positive but, to his dismay, the French Right-wing seemed to be doing most of the praising. The Left, on the other hand, virulently attacked Camus' vision in *L'Homme Révolté*. Camus stood accused of being a reactionary figure and a "lay-saint" for his excessive moralizing and appeals for moderation. Within a few months, *Les Temps Modernes* published a review of *L'Homme Révolté* in which Francis Jeanson attacked Camus' reading of Hegel as incomplete and dangerously simplistic.<sup>82</sup> Jeanson was dismayed by Camus' dismissal of Hegel and Marx, which he felt denied any role to historical and economic factors in the creation of revolutions. He also asserted that only Stalin was responsible for Stalinism, neither Hegel nor Marx could be

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<sup>82</sup>Jeanson would be instrumental in the publication of Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* later that year.

responsible for an individual's interpretation of communist doctrine. Camus offered a rebuttal, addressed to "Monsieur le Directeur"(Sartre), stating, "One doesn't decide the truth of an idea according to whether it is left- or right-wing, and even less by what the left or right wing decides to make of it. . . . In fact, if the truth seemed to me to be with the right wing, I would go along with it." He then told Sartre that he was weary of accepting criticism from a critic who "never placed anything but his armchair in the direction of history." <sup>83</sup> From there, the debate degenerated into personal attacks and resulted in Camus' exile from the literary circles of the Left.

This much-publicized rift between Camus and Sartre would soon be overshadowed by the events taking place in France's colonies. On May 7, 1954, French forces surrendered in Indochina at Dien Bien Phu, a political disaster for Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France's government. Coupled with the negotiated independence of Morocco and Tunisia, the French Empire was crumbling and Algeria seemed to be next in line. The large and multi-generational presence of *pied noirs*, however, made the potential loss of Algeria a social and political catastrophe in the making.<sup>84</sup> The outbreak of

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<sup>83</sup>Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, 307-308.

<sup>84</sup>A thorough examination of Algeria's role in the domestic policies of France can be found in William G. Andrews, *French Politics and Algeria: The Process of Policy Formation* (New York: Meredith, 1962) as well as in Tony Smith, *The French Stake in Algeria, 1945-1962* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

organized guerilla warfare in Algeria on November 1, Camus' 41st birthday, signaled the beginning of the death-knell for French colonialism and a crisis which would bring down the Fourth Republic of France.

Camus' reaction to the rebellion was one of concern, primarily for his family, who he felt could become victims of FLN attacks. He did not make any public declarations on the subject for some time, as he wanted to learn as much as possible about potential solutions. Sartre and many of the leftist intellectuals in Paris lent their immediate support to the FLN, a continuation of their earlier anti-colonial stance regarding Indochina. Camus found it ironic that those same leftists were now opposing the policies of colonialism, when in 1936 he had lobbied actively for the enfranchisement of Algerian Muslims only to be rebuffed by the Communist Party.

May, 1955 marked Camus' return to journalism. He accepted a position with *L'Express*, a newspaper founded with the goal of returning Pierre Mendès-France, who had been voted out of office in February. Camus felt sympathy for Mendès-France and, after the isolation imposed upon him by *L'Homme Révolté*, reluctantly agreed to contribute articles under the condition of unlimited freedom of speech. Camus believed that *L'Express* would provide a forum for discussion of a fair resolution to the Algerian uprising. His articles of July 9 and 23, 1955 discussed terrorism, repression and

the future of Algeria. He told his readers that elections were still falsified in Algeria and that Arab people had been driven to desperate means, noting that "In Algeria, as elsewhere, terrorism can be explained by a lack of hope."<sup>85</sup> Camus suggested a meeting to unite members of the French government, *pieds noirs*, and Arab nationalists in order to negotiate a truce and peaceful settlement.

Camus' "Letter to an Algerian Militant," was sent to Aziz Kessous, an Algerian socialist who advocated a resolution to the Algerian conflict without endangering the Muslims or Europeans caught in the crossfire.<sup>86</sup> In this letter, Camus writes:

You have said it very well, better than I can say it: we are condemned to live together. The Algerian French—and I thank you for having pointed out that they are not all bloodthirsty rich men—have been in Algeria for more than a century, and there are more than a million of them. . . . The "French fact" cannot be eliminated in Algeria, and the dream of a sudden disappearance of France is childish. . . . But this gives the French no right, in my opinion, to destroy the roots of Arab culture and life.<sup>87</sup>

Viewing moderates such as himself and Kessous as exceptions to the contemporary dialogue on Algeria, Camus declares that,

It is as if two insane people, crazed with wrath, had decided to turn into a fatal embrace the forced marriage from which they cannot free themselves. Forced to live

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<sup>85</sup>Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, 330.

<sup>86</sup>By this definition it is difficult to see how Kessous can be considered a "militant". Perhaps this is indicative of Camus' hope that a peace could be salvaged with the more violent elements of the FLN.

<sup>87</sup>Albert Camus, "Letter to an Algerian Militant," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 127-128.



together and incapable of uniting, they decide at least to die together.

Camus remains optimistic that electoral reforms in Algeria will assure a true peace and "launch the Franco-Arab community of Algeria on the road to the future." <sup>88</sup>

Camus' hopes for negotiation were set back by the massacre in North Constantine, Algeria on August 21st and 22nd, 1955, where 71 Europeans and 52 Muslims lost their lives, leading to the summary execution of 1,273 alleged rebels. Many of Camus' friends and colleagues believed that the Algerian conflict had now moved beyond a reformist solution.

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As with Albert Camus during the German occupation of France, Frantz Fanon assumed the role of journalist and propagandist to end the occupation of a foreign power. The articles Fanon wrote for *El Moudjahid* share in many ways the same tone of vengeance and apocalyptic vision as those authored by Camus in *Combat*. The enemy this time, however was France, whose 130-year occupation of Algeria would not end without an extraordinary effort. In addition to his duties at *El Moudjahid*, Fanon would use his medical training to treat wounded FLN guerrillas as well as establishing supply lines through the Sahara.

Within the pages of *El Moudjahid*, Fanon articulated the

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 128-129.

aims of the FLN but also contributed his own analysis and insights into his polemics. In September of 1957, Fanon authored an article entitled: "Disappointments and Illusions of French Colonialism," Fanon analyzes the methods used by France to maintain her colonies. He states that,

The first tactic of the colonial countries consists of basing themselves on official collaborators and feudal elements. These Algerians, who have been particularly singled out by a series of compromises, are regrouped and requested publicly to condemn "the seditious movement that disturbs the peace of the community."<sup>89</sup>

Camus' "Algerian Militant" Kessous would, no doubt, be counted among these elements in Algerian society. Fanon proceeds to describe the ways in which these "collaborators" have eventually converted to the cause of the FLN, presented a united front against which the French authorities can only respond with repression and torture. Frustrated in their ability to penetrate the unity of the FLN, "the French authorities today live under the domination of desires and prophecies"<sup>90</sup> that the FLN will crumble and the Algerian nation will cease to exist.

Fanon describes how torture has become a "way of life" for the French authorities in his article entitled, "Algeria Face to Face with the French Torturers". He notes that several French intellectuals have condemned the use of torture, yet "one cannot both be in favor of the maintenance

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<sup>89</sup>Frantz Fanon, "Disappointments and Illusions of French Colonialism" in *Toward the African Revolution*, 57-58.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 63.

of French domination in Algeria and opposed to the means that this maintenance requires," adding that "torture in Algeria is not an accident, or an error, or a fault. Colonialism cannot be understood without the possibility of torturing, of violating, or of massacring."<sup>91</sup> Fanon further criticizes the French intellectuals and the press for concerning themselves only with the effect of French torture on the perceptions of French morality. He argues that:

When the French intellectuals . . . repeat in chorus "that there is at the present time a vast campaign of dehumanization of French youth," or deplore that the French recruits "are learning fascism," one cannot fail to note that only the moral consequences of these crimes on the soul of the French are of concern to these humanists. The gravity of the tortures, the horror of the rape of little Algerian girls, are perceived because their existence threatens a certain idea of French honor.<sup>92</sup>

Fanon criticizes the hesitancy among French intellectuals, especially the moderates like Camus, to sympathize with the position of Arabs and Berbers in Algeria, rather than view the conflict in relation to its effects on France.

Fanon revisits the subject of French intellectuals in a series of articles in December, 1957. What he describes as a "painful ineffectiveness" characterizes the French democratic Left:

Because it has no hold on the people, the democratic Left, shut in upon itself, convinces itself in endless articles and studies that Bandung has sounded the death-

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<sup>91</sup>Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Face to Face with the French Torturers" in *Toward the African Revolution*, 66.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 70-71.

knell of colonialism. But it is the real people, the peasants and the workers, who must be informed. Incapable of reaching the millions of workers and peasants of the colonialist people, . . . the Left finds itself reduced to the role of Cassandra.<sup>93</sup>

This criticism is directed mainly at those intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty who could pontificate atop the perch of *Les Temps Modernes* to a very limited audience, doing very little to influence French public opinion. As for those intellectuals, like Camus, who condemn the use of terrorism and wish to effect a compromise, Fanon asserts that "there is something radically false about positions that begin with the formula: 'We agree in substance but not as to the methods . . .'"<sup>94</sup>

For Fanon, any link to the mother country is unacceptable, Algeria must assert its total independence by whatever means can accomplish this goal. Fanon goes so far as to state that "Every Frenchman in Algeria is at the present time an enemy soldier. So long as Algeria is not independent, this logical consequence must be accepted."<sup>95</sup> The harsh tone of this passage goes significantly beyond the tenets laid down by the FLN at the outbreak of the war, which stated that "French cultural and economic interests will be

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<sup>93</sup>Frantz Fanon, "French Intellectuals and Democrats and the Algerian Revolution" in *Toward the African Revolution*, 76-77.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 81.

respected, as well as persons and families."<sup>96</sup> The rhetoric employed by Fanon in *El Moudjahid* is that of a person swept up in revolutionary fervor, seeking total victory and the vanquishing of his opponents, mirroring the early stances of Camus' *Combat* articles calling for the end of German occupation.

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At the same time that Fanon's articles in *El Moudjahid* were advocating the expulsion of the French from Algeria, Camus attempted to organize a movement for a civilian truce. In February of 1956, Camus traveled to Algiers to give a speech, hoping to unite the warring factions in a productive dialogue regarding the future of Algeria. Promised a forum by the mayor of Algiers, Camus was subsequently denied an auditorium by local officials. Greeted by angry *pied-noir* protesters, and receiving death threats at his hotel, Camus realized that this was a very different Algeria from the one he had left during World War II. In an impromptu meeting with Muslim shopkeepers, Camus presented his plans for a civilian truce. When one of the shopkeepers, a member of the FLN, doubted that the French would accept such a proposal, Camus said, "If the FLN accepts the plan and not the French government, I will take up my pilgrim's staff and journey through France to denounce the government . . . But first,

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<sup>96</sup>Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 72.

the FLN must agree."<sup>97</sup>

Speaking to a full auditorium, which he finally received, and with protesters outside chanting "Death to Camus!" and "Algérie française!", Camus presented his vision for a truce which would exempt civilians as targets in the war. He argued that,

However black it may seem, the future of Algeria is not yet altogether sealed. If each individual, Arab or French, made an effort to think over his adversary's motives, at least the basis of a fruitful discussion would be clear. But if the two Algerian populations, each accusing the other of having begun the quarrel, were to hurl themselves against each other in a sort of xenophobic madness, then any chance for understanding would be drowned in blood. . . . But we Arabs and French who reject mad, nihilistic destruction cannot let this happen without launching a final appeal to reason.<sup>98</sup>

Echoing his argument in *L'Homme Révolté*, Camus argued, "We are too easily resigned to fate. We believe too readily that after all, only bloodshed makes history advance, and then the strongest make progress at the expense of the weakness of others."<sup>99</sup> Many in the crowd, particularly supporters of the FLN, were disappointed in Camus, whom they thought would take a political position on the conflict. Charles Geromini, a French doctor who had sided with the FLN, recalls:

We had gone to his lecture to hear one of our elders and if need be protect him from the fascists. . . . We expected that Camus would take a clear position on the Algerian problem. What we were treated to was a sweet-

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<sup>97</sup>Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, 335.

<sup>98</sup>Albert Camus, "Appeal for a Civilian Truce in Algeria" in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 135.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 141.

sister speech.<sup>100</sup>

Despite gaining the sympathy of many in attendance, Camus' calls for a truce went unheard. He returned to France without any concrete promises from either side, frustrated by his ineffectiveness.

On October 16, 1957, Camus found that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Many of Camus' contemporaries felt that he was undeserving of the prize, including Camus, who felt that Malraux should be accorded the honor. Following his failure in Algiers, Camus had remained mostly silent on the Algerian issue. During his acceptance of the award in Sweden, however, he broke his self-imposed moratorium on the war. In a debate with students at Stockholm University, Camus was accosted by an Algerian man who ridiculed his inactivity on behalf of Algeria. Camus responded by stating:

I have kept quiet for a year and eight months, which does not mean that I have stopped acting. I have always been, and still am a partisan of a fair Algeria, where the two populations must live together in peace and equality. . . . I feel a certain repugnance about explaining myself in public, but I have always condemned terrorism that works blindly in the streets of Algiers and one day might strike at my mother and my family. I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice.<sup>101</sup>

While this comment created an enormous amount of controversy for Camus, it illustrates the conflicted feelings he was

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<sup>100</sup>Taken from Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove, 1965), 172.

<sup>101</sup>Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, 378.

experiencing with regard to his Mediterranean ethic. The conflict in Algeria was forcing him to take sides among a people he still viewed as fundamentally alike in spirit. For Camus, this provoked a crisis of conscience: how could a Mediterranean ethic save Europe, when the land of its birth was tearing itself apart?

Camus would search for answers within the pages of *L'exil et le Royaume* (Exile and the Kingdom), a collection of short stories, and ultimately in *Le Premier Homme*, his unfinished novel. In these books, Camus returned to Algeria as not only the setting for European parables, but as a forum for his own internal crisis regarding his native land.

In "La femme adultère" ("The Adulterous Woman"), for example, Camus muses on the identity of the French Algerian as being one of infidelity. To be a French Algerian in Camus' Algeria is to be unfaithful to both France and Algeria. Janine, the main character of Camus' story, finds herself seduced by the vast landscape of Algeria's interior:

She could not take her gaze from the horizon. Over there, still farther south, at the place where sky and land met in a pure line, over there, it suddenly seemed to her that something was awaiting her, something that she had never been aware of until now, although it had always been lacking.<sup>102</sup>

While viewing the landscape, Janine "only knew that this kingdom had been promised to her and yet it would never be

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<sup>102</sup>Albert Camus, "The Adulterous Woman" in *Exile and the Kingdom* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 23.



hers, never again, except at this fleeting moment."<sup>103</sup> As

David Carrol argues:

Her [Janine's] Algerian being is thus rooted in her being possessed by and her possession of the sky and the limitless horizons of the land of Algeria itself. The promise of a relation with the other peoples of Algeria is mediated through her relation with the land . . .<sup>104</sup>

Edward Said, on the other hand, believes that the implied message in "La femme adultère" is that "going native can only be the result of mutilation, which produces a diseased, ultimately unacceptable loss of identity," hence the adulterous nature of Janine's experience.<sup>105</sup> This assertion seems rather unfair, given the historical context in which the story was written. "La femme adultère" is rather an illustration of Camus' wistfulness about the Algeria which "could have been," a land of boundless opportunity which was rapidly closing due to the war.

Camus' anxiety over the fate of Algeria manifests itself most powerfully in "L'hôte" ("The Guest"), a story in which Daru, a schoolteacher who speaks Arabic and teaches Arab children, is given the responsibility of taking an Arab criminal to the police. Daru represents "the colonizer who refuses"<sup>106</sup> in that he will not decide the fate of the

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>104</sup>David Carrol, "Camus's Algeria," 535.

<sup>105</sup>Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 178.

<sup>106</sup>See Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965)

prisoner and gives him the option to flee or turn himself in. Daru, however, pays for his neutrality. After the Arab turns himself in, Daru finds a message scribbled on his chalkboard:

"'You handed over our brother. You will pay for this.' Daru looked at the sky, the plateau, and, beyond, the invisible lands stretching all the way to the sea. In this vast landscape he had loved so much, he was alone.<sup>107</sup>

Carroll's analysis of this story, places it in the proper context of Camus' own public position on the Algerian conflict:

The just man, the "good colonizer," is misunderstood by both sides and has no place in the Algeria of armed conflict. He is condemned to solitude and treated as a traitor by the French and an enemy of the Arabs. His refusal to act on behalf of either side serves only to fuel the flames of conflict rather than extinguish them. Daru's solitude . . . is presented as both a punishment and a reward, the sign that his position is irrelevant to the outcome of the conflict and at the same time that it must be right and just *because it is misunderstood by both sides*.<sup>108</sup>

Camus was thus paralyzed by his inability to effect meaningful change in the Algerian conflict. At the most, he could continue to write and hope for a just solution to a conflict which had polarized not only the *pieds-noirs* and Arabs, but the Left and the Right in France. Camus was, once again, a stranger.

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In the spring of 1959, Frantz Fanon took a leave of absence from his medical duties and his post at *El Moudjahid*

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<sup>107</sup>Albert Camus, "The Guest" in *Exile and the Kingdom*, 109.

<sup>108</sup>David Carroll, "Camus's Algeria," 537.

to write *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, his sociological study of the revolution. The title of this book refers to the Republican calendar of the French Revolution, which marked the beginning of a new historical era. Unlike his articles for *El Moudjahid*, *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne* is not a straightforward partisan argument. Instead it is an exploration into of the transformative powers of revolutionary action. Fanon's study focuses on the ways in which traditional objects, such as the veil worn by Algerian women, have altered their meaning through their use in combatting the French.

Fanon describes the ways in which the veil has been perceived by the French throughout the colonization of Algeria. In an effort to strip away the traditional aspects of Algerian culture, French officials enacted legal measures to unveil women, whether they wanted to or not. As a consequence, after the outbreak of the war, Algerian women who wore Western fashions were not suspected of revolutionary activity and the FLN exploited this assumption. The FLN would train women to act and dress in the French fashion while smuggling arms and documents throughout the cities of Algeria. Through women sacrificing Muslim tradition for the cause of independence, "The Algerian woman . . . relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion. This new dialectic of the body and of the world is primary in

the case of revolutionary woman."<sup>109</sup> In this case, Fanon over-estimates the revolution's ability to change centuries-old traditions. While the efforts of women were needed to win the war, Islamic tradition would reassert itself after independence.

Fanon then moves to a discussion of the role radio broadcasts have played in the struggle for independence. He notes that "Before 1954, switching on the radio meant giving asylum to the occupier's words; it meant allowing the colonizer's language to filter into the very heart of the home, the last of the supreme bastions of the national spirit."<sup>110</sup> With the introduction of clandestine radio stations which broadcast accurate news about the ongoing war, the ownership of a radio became desirable and almost necessary. "The radio set was no longer part of the occupier's arsenal of cultural oppression," Fanon argues that now "Having a radio meant paying one's taxes to the nation, buying the right of entry into the struggle of an assembled people."<sup>111</sup> Progressive attempts to block the transmission of broadcasts and a ban on the sale of radios by the French authorities resulted in creative countermeasures by the Algerian people. To Fanon, these responses followed inevitably from the dialectical progression of revolutionary

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<sup>109</sup>Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove, 1965), 59.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 84.

history, as modified from Hegel and Sartre. Fanon often borrowed ideas from Sartre, but would not align himself completely with the political views of the French philosopher. He adopted dialectical reasoning for the sole purpose of liberation from colonial rule, not a world-wide proletarian revolution, which did not apply to underdeveloped countries. He would reformulate Hegel's master/slave dialectic accordingly. When the tyranny of the master's voice is finally contested, the desire to hear the people's voice must be fulfilled, no matter what the obstacle.<sup>112</sup>

Fanon then returns to the subject of French Algerians, whom he had earlier characterized as enemies without exception in *El Moudjahid*. In *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, Fanon modifies his stance, rejecting such descriptions as typical of the Manichean thinking which has led to colonialism in the first place. Fanon now believes that an individual or collectivity has the freedom to choose a position, regardless of national, political, or racial category. Inspired by Sartre's brand of revolutionary existentialism as well as by the actions of several courageous Europeans who lost their lives for the FLN, he states that, "French colonialism refuses to admit that a genuine European can really fight side by side with the

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<sup>112</sup>Gillo Pontecorvo's 1968 film, *Battle of Algiers*, adopts a very Fanonian interpretation of its subject, highlighting the same sociological aspects Fanon discusses in *A Dying Colonialism*.

Algerian people."<sup>113</sup> To deter this mode of thought and encourage other European Algerians to fight for a common future, Fanon declares: "For the FLN, in the new society being built, there are only Algerians. From the outset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is an Algerian."<sup>114</sup>

For Fanon, the Algerian revolution could serve as the model for transforming colonized countries around the world into vital, dynamic societies, bringing in a new era of freedom from domination. He writes that,

In stirring up these men and women, colonialism has regrouped them beneath a single sign. Equally victims of the same tyranny, simultaneously identifying a single enemy, this physically dispersed people is realizing its unity and founding in suffering a spiritual community which constitutes the most solid bastion of the Algerian Revolution.<sup>115</sup>

Fanon's apocalyptic vision would be challenged, however, by events he would witness in other decolonizing countries, leading to the underlying tone of caution and admonition of *Les Damnés de la terre*.

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The years 1957-1960 marked a conspicuous silence on the "Algerian question" for Camus. His contemporaries on the political Left, however, had become increasingly active in their support of the FLN. Sartre, in particular, who had

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<sup>113</sup>Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 160.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 119-120.

joined the Communist Party in 1952, the year of his feud with Camus, threw his commitment behind various movements for decolonization. As Annie Cohen-Solal notes,

Paradoxically, while Sartre's stature gained a wider prominence in what was to be the first of his many "third world" political causes, that of Camus retreated. For if Camus was the great missing figure of the Algerian war, this was yet a greater paradox.<sup>116</sup>

She argues that after Camus' failed political attempts to negotiate a truce, he "fell into the peculiar agnosticism where politics yielded to ethics."<sup>117</sup> Camus' retreat, however, was not complete. The trial of Ben Soddok, an FLN militant who had killed a pro-French Arab, attracted the attention of many French intellectuals, including Sartre, who was a star witness for the defense. Simone De Beauvoir noted that "Camus had refused to appear or even send a message,"<sup>118</sup> yet this was not the case. He did send a secret message to the court, due to his abhorrence of the death penalty and despite the fact that he considered Soddok a terrorist. He also testified on behalf of Amar Ouzegame, an old acquaintance from his days with the Communist Party in Algeria, who had been captured. His defense of these figures did not, however, indicate Camus' support for Algerian independence.

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<sup>116</sup>Annie Cohen-Solal, "Camus, Sartre and the Algerian War," *Journal of European Studies* 28 (March-June, 1998): 44.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>118</sup>Patrick McCarthy, *Camus*, 296.

In March of 1958, Camus met with Charles De Gaulle, a public figure he had expressed uneasiness about since the liberation of France, fearing he could become another Caesar. He had earlier ended his long friendship with Pascal Pia because of the latter's support for De Gaulle's presidency. But now Camus was attentive to any plan which would end the Algerian war with honor and justice for both sides. De Gaulle proposed a federal solution to the conflict, including partial independence with military control to remain with France. Camus was initially troubled by De Gaulle's ascent to the presidency through a "bloodless coup," yet at the same time believed that the new president could end the war in a fair manner and would not abandon the *pied noir* community of Algeria.

Under the title of *Actuelles III: Chroniques Algériennes*, Camus published a collection of his writings on Algeria, dating from 1939 and his years with *Alger Républicain*. Included in this collection were Camus' current political opinions on the conflict. In his preface, Camus denounces both French torture and FLN terrorism, noting that "Gandhi proved that it is possible to fight for one's people and win without for a moment losing the world's respect."<sup>119</sup> He criticizes the support given to the FLN by leftist intellectuals, as well as the right wing which condones the

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<sup>119</sup>Albert Camus, "Preface to Algerian Reports" in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 115.



torture of Algerian Arabs, arguing that "To justify himself, each relies on the other's crime. But that is a casuistry of blood, and it strikes me that an intellectual cannot become involved in it, unless he takes up arms himself."<sup>120</sup> These are the positions he had been making for years, although now Camus gives his ideas a concrete political solution by endorsing the recently proposed De Gaulle plan:

An Algeria made up of federated settlements and linked to France seems to me preferable to an Algeria linked to an empire of Islam which would bring the Arab peoples only increased poverty and suffering and which would tear the Algerian-born French from their natural home.<sup>121</sup>

Camus agrees that the era of colonialism is over, but that does not preclude a continued European presence in Algeria.

In "Algeria, 1958," Camus directly addresses the demands of the FLN. He concedes that the French colonial mission in Algeria has been a failure, plagued by injustices, including: "the perennial lie of constantly proposed but never realized assimilation," "the obvious injustice of the agrarian allocation and of the distribution of income," and "the psychological suffering" imposed among the Arabs of Algeria.<sup>122</sup> National independence, however, is unacceptable for Camus. He bluntly asserts that,

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 124-125.

<sup>122</sup>Albert Camus, "Algeria: 1958" in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 144.

There has never yet been an Algerian nation. The Jews, the Turks, the Greeks, the Italians, the Berbers would have just as much a right to claim the direction of that virtual nation. At present the Arabs do not alone make up all of Algeria. . . . The Algerian French are likewise, and in the strongest meaning of the word, natives.<sup>123</sup>

Although consistent with Camus' belief in the multi-valent nature of Algerian society and his Mediterranean philosophy, Camus' position does not take into account the FLN's unilateral offer of Algerian citizenship for all groups living in Algeria. In their earliest declarations, the FLN had stated:

All French citizens desiring to remain in Algeria will be allowed to opt for their original nationality, in which case they will be considered as foreigners, or for Algerian nationality, in which case they will be considered as Algerians, equal both as to rights and duties.<sup>124</sup>

Many French Algerian supporters of the FLN had declared Algerian nationality and fought alongside the Arabs and Berbers for independence from French domination. These facts put Camus in a political and metaphysical bind. Having renounced the current landscape of European civilization in *L'Homme Révolté*, and rejecting the idea of Algerian nationality, Camus was left alone, like Daru the schoolteacher, looking at an empty political and national landscape.

Camus' early suspicion and later hostility to the

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>124</sup>Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem*, 72.

concept of revolutions led him to believe that the movement for Algerian independence represented part of a larger scheme. He subscribed to the idea that Egypt's Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser's concept of Arab Nationalism was behind much of the FLN's rhetoric. "Arab imperialism," Camus argues,

in which Egypt, overestimating its strength, aims to take the lead and which, for the moment, Russia is using for its anti-Western strategy. The Russian strategy, which can be read on every map of the globe, consists in calling for the *status quo* in Europe and in fomenting trouble in the Middle East and Africa to encircle Europe on the south.<sup>125</sup>

Camus believed that the FLN, aside from its use of terrorism, had betrayed the idea of revolt he had articulated in *L'Homme Révolté*, and as a consequence was being used by the "new imperial power" of the Soviet Union.

*Actuelles III* made little impact upon its publication and hastened Camus' retreat into literature and drama, away from the political crisis which continued to consume him. On January 3, 1960, Camus was killed in a car accident while travelling with the Gallimard family, the manuscript of *Le Premier Homme* in the car with him. His last novel would prove to be his most personal statement of the Algerian question; an autobiographical epic about *pied-noir* society, in which he tried to resolve the contradictions within himself and Algerian society in general.

*Le Premier Homme* tells the story of Jacques Cormery, a

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<sup>125</sup>Albert Camus, "Algeria: 1958," 146.

third-generation French Algerian, a member of a "tribe" of a new breed of men, uniquely Algerian in mentality and philosophy, the men of Camus' generation:

He too was a member of the tribe, . . . in the land of oblivion where everyone was the first man, where he himself had to bring himself up on his own, without a father, . . . and he had to learn on his own, to grow in force and strength on his own, to find his morality and his truth on his own, . . . like all the men born in this land, who, one by one, tried to learn to live without roots and without faith.<sup>126</sup>

Camus defines each generation of Algerians as "first men," lacking a past to guide their actions. According to David Carroll, "The history of Camus's Algeria thus consists of a repeated forgetting or destruction of the past, of the disappearance of the traces of all predecessors and even of their memory."<sup>127</sup> *Le Premier Homme* also echoes Camus' feelings on the virtues and perils of poverty among the Algerian peasantry and laborers. For him, French Algerians would remain the forgotten proletariat, essentialized by French thinkers as part of the oppressive colonialist class. Camus' experience of poverty as a young man would never leave him and remained an integral part of his Algeria. In Camus' vision of Algeria, Arabs and Europeans share bonds of fraternity, even, or especially in times of crisis. One of Camus' characters, a farmer who refuses to leave his land, claims that

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<sup>126</sup>Albert Camus, *The First Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 180-181.

<sup>127</sup>David Carroll, "Camus's Algeria," 540.

"We were made to understand each other. Even as stupid and brutal as we are, but with the same blood of men. We'll kill each other for a little longer, cut off each other's balls and torture each other a bit. And then we'll go back to living together among men. The land wants it that way."<sup>128</sup>

While this seems a romantic notion in light of the events in Algeria since 1954, Camus should not be castigated for such a view, as O'Brien and Said have done.

Throughout his career, Camus has faced and exploited the contradictions within Algerian society to great literary effect. The absurd trial of Meursault in *L'Etranger* and the uncertain fate of Darrou in "L'hôte" are linked to the failures of the French colonial mission, preventing the true realization of the Mediterranean philosophy Camus espoused. His appeals to moderation and humanity would go unheeded and Algeria would gain her independence. Subsequent events in the former colony would prove the validity of his insights and evoke a nostalgia for Albert Camus' Algeria that could have been, but never was.

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For Frantz Fanon, 1959 was an intense year. In addition to writing *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, Fanon was injured while on a reconnaissance mission for the FLN. Seeking treatment in Rome, Fanon eluded two assassination attempts including a mistimed car bomb. Back in Tunisia, the Algerian Provisional Government appointed him ambassador to

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<sup>128</sup>Albert Camus, *The First Man*, 168-169.

Ghana. While fulfilling his duties, he escaped a kidnapping attempt by French intelligence agents which would have diverted his flight into the custody of French Authorities.

As a diplomat, Fanon experienced the phenomenon of decolonization among the other countries of French Africa. While he approved of much that he saw, he was also troubled by what happened after the end of colonial rule. In some cases, the struggles for independence were being betrayed by the native bourgeoisie who sought to profit from their roles as revolutionaries. When he contracted leukemia in 1960, he felt the need to write down his observations on decolonization's strengths and weaknesses. Knowing his time was limited, Fanon felt "It was necessary that I hurry to say and do the maximum."<sup>129</sup>

The result of Fanon's reflections on decolonization, *Les Damnés de la terre*, has become one of the most famous and influential books to come out of the end of the colonial era. Exploring the roles of violence, spontaneity, national consciousness, and culture in the independence of former colonies, he combined the observations within his previous books and articles with a reappraisal of decolonization movements to produce his last political and sociological study of colonized people.

Jean-Paul Sartre, whose activism in Third-World

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<sup>129</sup>David Caute, *Frantz Fanon*, 69.

liberation movements had increased during the 1950s, wrote the preface to *Les Damnés de la terre* after Fanon's death. Sartre's essay seeks to explain Fanon to a European audience, much in the same way that his "Explication de *L'Etranger*" introduced Camus to the French literary scene, and with the same muted paternalism. He explains that Fanon ". . . speaks of you often, never to you,"<sup>130</sup> meaning his white European readers. Sartre is correct in a sense, but Fanon does address the important role that Europe should play in the revolutionary project he envisions: "This huge task which consists of reintroducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind, will be carried out with the indispensable help of the European people."<sup>131</sup> Sartre places Fanon within the revolutionary tradition of Europe, using its tools to throw off the economic, military, and cultural domination which has marked colonialism from the beginning. Sartre urges his readers to "Have the courage to read this book, for in the first place it will make you ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary sentiment." He goes on to say that,

Fanon is the first since Engels to bring the process of history into the clear light of day. . . . this is enough to enable him to constitute, step by step, the dialectic which liberal hypocrisy hides from you and which is as much responsible for our existence as for

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<sup>130</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface" to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 10.

<sup>131</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 106.

his.<sup>132</sup>

Sartre uses this forum to attack the recently deceased Camus in a thinly-veiled criticism of European intellectuals who reject violence:

A fine sight they are too, the believers in non-violence, saying that they are neither executioners nor victims. Very well then; if you're not victims when the government which you've voted for, when the army in which your younger brothers are serving without hesitation or remorse have undertaken race murder, you are, without a shadow of a doubt, executioners.<sup>133</sup>

Sartre's preface, while a sufficient introduction to Fanon's book, is not entirely accurate. The discussion below will highlight the subtleties of Fanon's revolutionary vision, rather than the often cited "call to arms" for which Fanon has become famous.

Fanon begins his study with the controlling premise that "Decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. . . . Decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it."<sup>134</sup> Fanon believes that revolutionary violence is the logical consequence of colonialism, which "is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."<sup>135</sup> Fanon analyzes the dialectic of violence, demonstrating the

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<sup>132</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface" to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 14.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>134</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 35, 37.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 61.



transformative effect of revolutionary violence for colonized peoples. His argument, echoing the argument of Nietzsche in *Twilight of the Idols*, is that "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self respect."<sup>136</sup> Fanon has been attacked for these views by critics like Hannah Arendt, who feels that he glorifies random violence. This is far from what Fanon argues, however. It is only in the collective, ordered, practice of violence against a defined enemy that can produce the cathartic effect he describes. His advocacy of violence, however, marks the greatest intellectual gulf between Fanon and Camus, who rejected such notions of collective violence for historical change.

In *Les Damnés de la terre*, Fanon offers a critique of Marxism and an adaptation of Marxist analysis to the colonial situation. In order to understand the economic dynamics of colonialism in underdeveloped countries, "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem."<sup>137</sup> In general, Fanon agrees with Marx that history runs dialectically, through the struggle between factions. The main difference, Fanon argues, is that rather than factions being defined by economic class, in colonial relationships the deciding factor is race:

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 40.

Economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging or not belonging to a given race.<sup>138</sup>

Unlike Marx, Fanon believes that the true revolutionary movement originates from the peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat, as the proletariat has been co-opted by the dominant colonialist class.

It is with the colonial bourgeoisie, however, where Fanon sees the greatest danger to revolutionary movements. In his chapter on "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," Fanon argues that the weakness congenital to underdeveloped countries is "the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mold that its mind is set in."<sup>139</sup> Drawing upon his observations in sub-Saharan Africa, Fanon demonstrates the way in which the nationalization of resources is betrayed by this same middle class: "To them, nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are the legacy of the colonial period."<sup>140</sup> Because of their lack of real knowledge of the economy, they will invite the West back into the fold for investment and training. "The national middle class," Fanon argues, "will have nothing better to do than to take on

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 152.

the role of manager for Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe."<sup>141</sup>

Coinciding with this betrayal of the bourgeoisie, Fanon argues, is the rise of tribalism. When the spirit of independence movements diminishes, economic advantages lead to the reappearance of tribal divisions. When economic advantages are poorly distributed geographically in new nations,

The nationals of these rich regions look upon the others with hatred, and find in them envy and covetousness, and homicidal impulses. Old rivalries which were there before colonialism, old interracial hatreds come to the surface.<sup>142</sup>

The cohesion effected by the struggle for independence will be lost, Fanon believes, if the national bourgeoisie does not submit to the needs of the people who brought about independence in the first place. If this is not accomplished, the revolution betrays itself and very little progress is made from the era of colonial domination.

Fanon also discourages allegiances between the Third World and the emergent superpowers of The United States and the Soviet Union. He advocates a position of strategic non-alignment for the Third World, stressing that, "The underdeveloped countries which have used the fierce competition which exists between the two systems in order to assure the triumph of their struggle for national liberation,

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 159.

should however refuse to become a factor in the competition."<sup>143</sup> He feels that the Third World should also accept economic aid from the superpowers and feels this is not a contradiction if underdeveloped countries still refuse alignment.

Fanon was rapidly approaching death at the time *Les Damnés de la terre* was finished, hence the urgent tone within its pages. Troubled by the factionalism he saw within the FLN leadership at the time, this book is his final word on revolution and its perils. Frantz Fanon died on December 6, 1962 in Washington, D.C., where he had been sent for treatment as a last resort to save his life. Three months after his death, Algeria gained its independence from France.

*Les Damnés de la terre* is thus Fanon's lasting legacy. Its influence has been profound, although Fanon's warnings in "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" have gone largely unheeded. While he was still alive, Fanon found the rise of African personality cults and dictatorships disheartening. That Kwame Nkrumah, the kind of leader Fanon despised, evoked Fanonian theory in the formation of Ghana's government seems particularly absurd. *Les Damnés de la terre* is at the same time a handbook for revolution, but also restraint once the nation has gained its independence. The cautionary tone of Fanon's last work evokes the moderation in revolt which Camus

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 98-99.

championed in *L'Homme Révolté* and it has proven to the detriment of Europe and the Third World, that the lessons of Camus and Fanon have gone unheeded.

Conclusion: Camus, Fanon, and Postcolonialism

Michel Foucault has asserted that, "It is not easy to characterize a discipline like the the history of ideas: it is an uncertain object, with badly drawn frontiers, methods borrowed from here and there, and an approach lacking in rigour and stability."<sup>144</sup> This rings especially true with the approaches scholars have taken with the intellectual legacies of Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon. In the 37 years after Algeria gained its independence, the works of both authors have been analyzed within a great variety of disciplines and emphases. Within the last fifteen years, Camus and, especially, Fanon have become integral parts of the discipline broadly defined as "post-colonial theory."

Using the methodologies of sociology and literary criticism, post-colonial theorists have attempted to come to terms with the role decolonization has played in the present condition of the Third World. Those conditions include an Algeria decimated by a civil war, which began when the FLN government cancelled elections in 1992 which would have brought the FIS Islamic party into power. Yet, many of these scholars tend to focus primarily on the role of colonial identity of thinkers such as Camus and Fanon, while ignoring the true political and historical consequences of their

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<sup>144</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 136.

words.

In the 1990s, Edward Said has apparently cornered the market on political analysis in his *Culture and Imperialism*, a book which is almost ubiquitously cited in books and articles regarding post-colonialism. As argued above, Said's analysis of Camus does not go much beyond that of Connor Cruise O'Brien; indeed, Said believes that O'Brien "lets [Camus] off the hook," in not explicitly defining Camus as an instrument of French hegemony in Algeria.<sup>145</sup> Said is kinder to Fanon, the counter-hegemonic figure *par excellence* in his Gramscian study of colonial literature. That Camus regarded the colonial project in Algeria as a failure and considered himself a critic of European civilization in general, does not mitigate Said's analysis of Camus, which seeks out the heroes and villains of the colonial experience; it is the type of Manichean thinking which Fanon would reject.

Further critiques of Camus have echoed Said's and O'Brien's placement of Camus within the European cultural milieu, focusing on the strange absence of Arab characters with depth in *L'Etranger* and *La Peste*, his two best-known works. Emily Apter has expanded this analysis with regard to *Le Premier Homme*, but adds little else.<sup>146</sup> By adding Camus' insights into European civilization in the pages of *L'Homme*

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<sup>145</sup>Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 173.

<sup>146</sup>Emily Apter, "Out of Character: Camus's French Algerian Subjects," *MLN* 112 (1997): 499-516.

Révolté, perhaps the generalizations regarding Camus would be at least qualified by his Mediterranean critique of Europe.

The appropriation of Frantz Fanon by academics is complex, but still divorced from the political and historical realities in which Fanon wrote his major works. If we are to believe the editors of *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, the "fifth stage" of Fanon studies is now under way. The first stage is marked by an appropriation of Fanon's thinking in the revolutionary thought of the 1960s, in which *Les Damnés de la terre* was utilized as a handbook for groups as diverse as Latin American Marxists and the Black Panthers of the United States. Stokeley Carmichael of the Black Panther party even considered Fanon as his "patron saint." The second stage is the biographical study of Fanon by Geismar, Gendzier, Cauter, and later, Bulhan and McCulloch. The third stage is the study of Fanon's political theory by writers such as Hannah Arendt and Renate Zahar, along with efforts to mold Fanon into the Marxist theorist he never truly was. The fourth stage is the literary study of Fanon's works by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, who draws upon the identity crises in *Peau noire, masques blancs* while subjecting his thought to contemporary conventions of political correctness.<sup>147</sup> The fifth stage, as articulated by the editors of *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, differs little from the fourth in that

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<sup>147</sup>See Homi K. Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative," in *The Location of Culture*, 40-65.



Fanon's thought is used to critique the state of the humanities and social sciences.<sup>148</sup>

While Fanon can provide valuable insight into the creation of postcolonial literature, attempts by scholars to make him an expert on Hegelian dialectics or Lacanian psychoanalysis distract us from his most important contributions to decolonization, nationalism, and his warnings of the imminent betrayal of these ideals.<sup>149</sup>

In this intellectual climate, how does one write an intellectual history of Camus and Fanon? Greg Denning, the great historian of Pacific exploration, believes that "History is all the ways we encode the past in symbol form to make a present," or, "History is the texted past for which we have a cultural poetic."<sup>150</sup> That the writings of Camus and Fanon have become part of today's cultural poetic is indisputable, as they are a constant source of intellectual debate. To bring these writings into their proper historical context is an important step in fully realizing the importance of each writer's contribution to the current

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<sup>148</sup>Lewis Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renee White, *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (New York: Blackwell, 1996), 5-7.

<sup>149</sup>A fascinating counter-polemic on the misappropriation of Fanon by post-colonial theorists can be found in Nigel Gibson, "Thoughts About Doing Fanonism in the 1990s," *College Literature* 26 (Spring, 1999): 96-117. as well as in Neil Lazarus, "Disavowing Decolonization: Fanon, Nationalism, and the Problematic of Representation in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Research in African Literatures* 24 (Winter, 1993): 69-98.

<sup>150</sup>Greg Denning, *The Death of William Gooch: A History's Anthropology* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 14.

dialogue over postcolonialism. Given the extraordinary parallels between the intellectual development of both Camus and Fanon and their shared moments in the history of both Europe and Algeria, it is surprising that no academic attempt has been made to link these two thinkers in the progress from colonial to post-colonial history. A re-engagement with Camus and Fanon within the real historical and political context of the Algerian crisis helps to flesh out the ambiguities and contradictions of colonial discourse, giving a fuller picture of the "in-betweenness," to use Homi Bhabha's term, which characterizes colonial society.

Although neither Camus or Fanon confronted each other directly in their writings, their work shapes a perhaps vital debate over the trauma of decolonization. In a world of Manichean divisions of thought, Camus and Fanon offer an alternative to "either-or" choices and approximate each other's thought more than their contemporary critics might allow. Had these two great minds of the Algerian revolutionary period lived to see the horrors of the present state of the Third World, in which corruption, tribalism, and wholesale slaughter have become the rule, rather than the exception, they would no doubt feel that their voices had not been heard above the din of revolutionary fervor characterizing their moment in time. Their important contributions to today's "cultural poetic" need to be understood fully in order to understand the present trauma of the Third World.

These contributions can be understood textually, but must be understood historically for students of these authors to learn from the mistakes of colonialism and decolonization. By reading Camus and Fanon together, in the proper historical context, we can appreciate the uniqueness of their visions and break down the academic barriers which have traditionally separated Camus and Fanon from each other.

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